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PUBLIC ART, URBAN ARTS
ON AESTHETICS, PRACTICES AND LANGUAGES IN THE CITY

Edited by
Alice Borchi, Filippo Fimiani,
Enrico Chinellato and Francesca Sabatini

Reeh, Bolonaki, Gariso, Ruzzier, Morea, Urso, Mehan, Mostafavi, Tikhomirova, Gabriel, Von Essen, Guardini, Kjellgren, Peterson, Staundinger, Scardapane, Borriello, Cosentino, Cozzatella, Mozzelin

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EDITORIAL

Public Art, Urban Arts: on Aesthetics, Practices and Languages in the City

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Urban spaces and their transformations, as well as the very notions of 'public' and collective memory, have grown into increasingly critical, complex, and fragmented subjectivities. This change entails a review and rearticulation of collective sensemaking in which art is inevitably involved as a syntax of urban space. As tangible or intangible products of human action imbued with symbolic and aesthetic value, 'works of art' proliferate on the streets and squares of cities, partaking in expressing relations, catalysing social life, embodying power, and entailing conflict. By being either an integration to, or an intervention in the urban space, art has assumed over time a variety of context-specific forms and languages, diversely responding to the expressive patterns of local cultures and political formations.

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In the notion of 'public art', art is public in a twofold sense: first of all, because it is manifest in a public space, unfiltered by the walls that conventionally enclose other types of artworks. And second, because its very creation is often public, entailing an open, shared process in its design or in its (co)production – a characteristic that differentiates it from monuments and sculptures in public spaces. However, like monuments and sculptures, public art has political connotations, either asserting or contesting power: in its twofold 'publicness,' it both triggers public processes of action/reaction to political stances, and it gathers specific communities and actors around its production dynamics. Indeed, many artistic interventions in urban public spaces have been enacted to articulate ideologies, achieve consensus, enforce political agendas, or memorialise and celebrate people and events. Processes of co-production and consultation in the creation of public art, while often presented under the guise of cultural democracy, can serve both as a way to enhance cultural participation and as a form of public legitimation of dominant cultural narratives. The reverse is also true: art has become the powerful catalyst of acts of resistance and contestation, where its symbolic meaning acts as a salient channel for social and political claims. Many artistic practices are today situated in the contested terrain of social struggles and urban futures, often in the form of ephemeral agencies by performative artefacts. New digital media and mobile devices have been used to multiply and amplify the ways in which people can engage with urban space; as a result, the digital sphere has become another site for the construction and contestation of values related to public art.

In both cases, and in the many nuanced typologies that fall in between these polarities, public art has also become instrumental in what is commonly known as urban regeneration – that is, the process of attributing new meanings and values to compelling and crucial urban areas, also through creative and critical interventions in spaces of crisis, where different forms of dissent or social cohesion, of gentrification or regenerative local economies are taking place. By acting across the cultural and political guerrilla for the control and ownership of shared spaces, very different practices participate in the engendering of counter-institutional narratives, transforming the urban landscape into a political palimpsest where institutionalised displays of art, artification, and aestheticization are challenged by radical interventions that leverage social engagement and collective mobilisation.

This issue of the European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes explores the constantly evolving and expanding boundaries of the notion of 'public art,' delving into challenges related to the form of public art in urban space, its relation to urban regeneration, and the controversies and potential of community participation and public engagement. Encompassing a rich spectrum of cross-disciplinary contributions offered by both scholars and practitioners, the four sections of this issue

– Positions, Main, Practices, and Miscellanea – revolve around seven thematic areas.

The exploration of **urban aesthetics and narrative analyses of the city** unveils a multifaceted understanding of urban spaces. Unpacking this issue, **Henrik Reeh**'s position paper initiates this discourse by exploring the concept of 'site-specificity' in urban aesthetics, focusing on Venice and Marseille. Reeh explores how scholars and professionals influence site-specific qualities and their implications for urban culture and transformation. He highlights Venice's diverse site-specific qualities beyond tourism and Marseille's transition from industrial urbanism to cultural planning, offering insights into the appreciation of site-specificity and contemporary questions about urbanity and aesthetics. Building upon this awareness, **Elisa Mozzelin**'s paper delves into psychogeography, a method pioneered by the Situationist International in the 1950s, aimed at understanding how geographic environments influence individual psychology. She examines Ralph Rumney's application of psychogeography to Venice, utilizing the fotoromanzo (photo novel) format as a narrative tool. Through this approach, Rumney seeks to represent Venice's analysis as a condensed form of affective mapping, tapping into the subversive potential inherent in psychogeography.

Transitioning to **the 'making of' the public artwork between objects, processes, and place**, **Irene Ruzzier**'s paper focuses on the structures and methodologies employed in artistic practices in urban spaces, using the Public Art Agency Sweden as a case study. The paper addresses the often opaque and convoluted production processes of art in public spaces, which can hinder its integration into urban development and design projects. Ruzzier highlights the scarcity of scholarship on procedures and methods for developing public art projects and aims to bridge this gap by offering insights into the workings of the Public Art Agency Sweden. The study draws from Ruzzier's six-month internship at the Agency, during which she conducted documental and bibliographic research, interviewed staff members, participated in usual work activities, and contributed to the development of two artistic projects. Concurrently, **Amanda Gabriel**, **Elisabeth Von Essen**, **Beatrice Guardini**, **Sara Kjellgren**, **Claire Peterson**, and **Christopher Staundinger** explore land art's capacity for place-making. They investigate how brief exposure to a space through creative performances can cultivate personal meaning and emotional bonds. Through reflections on land art projects conducted as part of an international master course, the authors highlight the cognitive and embodied processes involved in developing a deeper relationship with place, while raising questions about rights to the city and public space.

Moving to **the social and political dimensions of public art**, **Styliani Bolonaki** examines the intersection of aesthetics and urban life. Focusing on art practices with ethical commitments to the social-political sphere,

the article explores participatory and collaboratively-led activities akin to activist practices. It reevaluates public art's role as a socio-political agent, considering the autonomy of visual arts and its impact on cultural inclusion/exclusion in public spaces. The paper discusses current themes surrounding the social-political engagements of public art, reflecting on its dynamic relationship with urban multiculturalism.

In a similar vein, the articles by **Yulia Tikhomirova** and by **Vincenzo Cosentino** and **Chiara Cozzatella** explore the impact of **contested memories and postcolonial identities** on urban landscapes, respectively. Tikhomirova's contribution investigates the evolving concept of monumentality in contemporary art, focusing on counter-, non-, and anti-monumental practices as critical forms of institutional commemoration and social ritual. In her article, she questions the validity of monumentality as shaping synthesis of collective memory by analyzing the remembrance practices of the Bologna-based art collective TIST - This Is So Temporary. The contribution by Cozzatella and Cosentino takes into account the historical and symbolic significance of urban structures in Mogadishu, particularly focusing on Italian colonial and religious art. They discuss the impact of interventions like the construction of the Mogadishu cathedral in 1928, reflecting Italy's attempts to Europeanize the city. Using religious, architectonic-spatial, and political lenses, they unravel the complexities of colonial urban art, highlighting how it displaced local populations and reshaped the urban landscape.

Ana Gariso's paper touches upon issues of **commissioned, un-commissioned, or unauthorised art in urban space**. Her study explores the ambivalence surrounding graffiti and street art in contemporary cities. In her contribution, she contends that, on one hand, there is a growing validation and promotion of these art forms by municipal policymakers, recognizing creativity as an asset. However, she also highlights an effort to eliminate or prevent unauthorized street art. This ambivalence arises from these practices' ability to shape new city images and public space discourses. Gariso approaches this phenomenon from urban communication studies through an ethnographic study of the local legal frameworks in Lisbon and Bologna regulating graffiti and street art production.

Shifting focus to **public art as a means of transforming, developing, or regenerating urban space**, **Valeria Morea** and **Liola Urso**'s paper explores the dynamics of cultural clusters in urban regeneration, focusing on the planned district of Manifattura delle Arti in Bologna. The authors contend that while policymakers often attempt to stimulate cultural clusters through top-down strategies, it is observed that clusters often form organically without direct intervention. Their contribution investigates this phenomenon through 14 interviews with key actors in the district, revealing the emergence of a spontaneous subcluster of bottom-up organizations and the role of civil society in driving regeneration and inclusion efforts.

Meanwhile, the paper by **Silvia Scardapane** and **Luca Borriello** investigates the rise of urban creativity, particularly focusing on the emergence of 'new muralism.' They explore how this form of expression has redefined public spaces, especially in marginalized areas, leading to the development of networks of meaning. Scardapane and Borriello propose the concept of "urban creativity systems" and examine various case studies, including the "Parco dei Murales" program in the city of Naples, aimed at enriching social housing complexes with murals and community involvement.

Lastly, **Asma Mehan** and **Sina Mostafavi** explore the intersections of **AR, VR, and public artwork across urban space and digital public space**. Their paper investigates how public exhibitions, urban spaces, and socio-political norms shape urban thresholds in Houston and Amsterdam. They explore the influence of new media like AR and VR on design production and consumption, merging fields like Design Computation, Urban Communities, and Spatial Justice. Their contribution primarily emphasizes critical urban studies and the role of Extended Reality (XR) in advancing theoretical and methodological frameworks in the presented immersive installation project.

Alice Borchi is a Lecturer in Creative Industries at the University of Leeds (UK). Her research interests include the study of the cultural commons and cultural value, with a particular focus on participatory practices and shared governance in cultural policy and management. She is also interested in interdisciplinary approaches to the safeguard of the commons that bring together environmental and cultural perspectives.
A list of her publications can be found here
https://scholar.google.com/citations?user=bVHZP2EAAAAJ&&hl=en

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For a list of his publications, see here
https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=it&&user=myv1AQ4AAAAJ

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Photo by the author

POSITIONS

The Traveling Scholar and Harbors of Urban Aesthetics: Discovering the Ambiguities of Site-Specificity in Venice and Marseille

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ABSTRACT
This study addresses the discovery of site-specific qualities in contemporary Venice and Marseille. Both Venice and Marseille are classic harbor cities, but their links to tourism are increasing in the age of cultural planning and consumption. Two series of results stand out. Venice proves to be site-specific at all levels of the frontstage city, as well as in the offstage of its industrious areas. Instead of rejecting the latter as alien to Venice, one should recognize the harbor zones as a reservoir of urban site-specificity. If these areas become truly public, they may in turn add a modern relief to the conventional staging of Venice. The observations of site-specificity in Marseille delve into a particular place in a critical situation: the collective bus shelter in the Vieux Port during a torrential shower. Here, sensory and reflective processes contribute to the researcher's appreciation of site-specific qualities. Present on site, the researcher is affected by sensory impressions and socio-cultural exchanges. This reciprocity between human presence and the environment transforms urban space from cool objectivity into a matter of lived life. Critically reconsidered, such experiences may strengthen the urban-cultural reflections on site-specificity as a realm of ambiguous contributions to urban aesthetics.

KEYWORDS
Site-specificity, Harbor cities, Venice, Marseille, Siegfried Kracauer

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> In this way the person leaving the harbor loses his sense of the measures of life, a life that lies behind him. It falls apart in nothing but single parts with which he may improvise the fragments of another life.
>
> Siegfried Kracauer[1]

Foreword

When “site-specificity” becomes a central focus in urban aesthetics, it soon proves necessary to address the ways in which scholars and professionals actually come to determine site-specific qualities in urban fabrics and social life. How are certain traits and habits singled out as ‘site-specific’? May they also serve as elements in a refashioning of harbor areas to the benefit of urban culture? Or do issues of urban aesthetics go beyond the realm of design and normativity?

The present study provides answers to such questions of urbanity and aesthetics by means of observations from two South-European cities. In both cities site-specificity and harbor areas are closely related with matters of aesthetic experience in general and with urban aesthetics in particular. For centuries, Venice and Marseille have forged long-term and intimate symbolic relationships between surrounding waters and diverse harbor functions. Today, encounters with such urban spaces and practices invite the visiting researchers to single out particular and even unexpected aspects in urban fabric and contemporary life. Thanks to site-specific features, self-reflexive approaches to harbor transformation and to urban aesthetics at large may develop.

The situation of Venice – a city located in a lagoon – implies a rich variety of site-specific qualities. Some of these fit neatly into the image of front-stage and authentic Venice. Others belong to an industrial and modern layer of city reality, and they should not be underestimated. In this way, a broader conception of site-specificity comes to the fore, and it may foster a less nostalgic representation of Venice as well as provide other values in contemporary harbor transformation than those of cruise tourism.

Historically, Marseille is a Mediterranean harbor city *per se*. After modernization and dislocation of its harbor territories in the early 20th century already, this city is currently taking important steps from industrial urbanism into cultural planning. This transformation allows for new and unprogrammed experiences of site-specificity, even in the traditional harbor settings. Considered with a bit of conceptual care, such situations may also teach us what it means to “appreciate site-specific qualities”

1 ”So verliert der aus dem Hafen Scheidende den Sinn für die Maße des Lebens, das hinter ihm liegt. Es zerfällt ihm in lauter einzelne Teile, aus denen er die Bruchstücke eines anderes Lebens improvisieren mag.” Siegfried Kracauer, ”Stehbars im Süden” (1926), in S. Kracauer, *Straßen in Berlin und anderswo* (Berlin: Das Arsenal, 1987 [1964]), p. 51, trans. Henrik Reeh.

– and how one may be attentive to site-specificity in those experiential processes which underlie urban aesthetics.

Altogether, Venice and Marseille not only provide observations of site-specificity but also spark reflections on the ways in which site-specific qualities are appreciated, and raise contemporary questions of urbanity and aesthetics.

I. Encountering Venice – Determining Site-Specificities

> Venice is a port, a huge port, in constant activity. Shuttles, *vaporetti*, taxi boats, yachts, sailboats, patrol boats, barges, canoos, tugboats, very big cruise ships. You can live constantly on water, and return home, garden and terrace.
>
> Philippe Sollers[2]

1. The view from above – heightened by XXL cruise ships

There is no doubt in the mind of the airline passenger; this is indeed Venice that one sees down there. Sitting at the window in the right side of the airplane on its way to the Marco Polo Airport, one clearly observes the site-specific structure of Venice with its two or three major areas united around the inverted S-shape of Canal Grande. This unity distinguishes itself from the muddy waters and swampy islets of the lagoon. Once inside the city labyrinth, one will never encounter such a strikingly simple image of Venice, not even on a map.

The reality effect of the structure is enhanced by three gigantic cruise ships which are anchored at strategic places that the pedestrian city tourist rarely comes across, and certainly will not perceive in the same sculptural and scale-revealing way as provided by the oblique view from the airplane. This experience may last just for a minute, but the contrasted coexistence of traditional Venice around Canal Grande and the extra-large bodies of contemporary cruise ships will reoccur in the following observations on site-specific harbor qualities in Venice.

2. Horizontal waterscapes and vertical *briccole*

As soon as one sets foot on the ground, horizontality takes over. The *Alilaguna* boat line goes straight through the lagoon from the airport to the city, and during this trip, lasting about an hour, one experiences the linear

2 "Venise est un port, un grand port, à l'activité incessante. Navettes, vaporetti, motoscafi, yachts, voiliers, vedettes, péniches, barges, canots, remorqueurs, containers, très gros paquebots. On peut y vivre constamment sur l'eau, et rentrer chez soi, jardin et terrasse." Philippe Sollers, *Dictionnaire amoureux de Venise* (Paris: Plon, 2004), p. 89, trans. Henrik Reeh.

aquatic highway as a realm of speed and waves. The powerful engines of varnished taxi boats turn the fairway into a whirlpool. Meanwhile, the traveler registers the velocity of the trip via the accelerated rhythm of passing *briccole*, scultural posts of barked treetrunks which are planted at regular distances in the water and numbered for the sake of order. (Fig. 1) Delineating the fairway, these pilings provide site-specific components in the lagoon of Venice, as well as in the inner canals of the city.[3]

FIG. 1 Pilings framing the fairway between Venice and the Marco Polo Airport. Source: Photo by the author.

3. Heterogeneous sailing practices

The journey of the arriving traveler ends at one of the *vaporetto* stops in Canal Grande, next to the Rialto Bridge with its monumental staircase and two rows of shops. The boat traffic on the canal is intense, and one hardly understands how *vaporetti*, taxiboats, police and ambulance vessels, along with utilitarian motor boats and ritual gondolas for tourists, are capable of coexisting without ever colliding. Although the omnipresence of flashing cameras and smartphones may recall the pejorative judgment of Venice as an urban themepark, one cannot blame the (other) tourists who feel compelled to react and therefore try to eternalize this amazing urban spectacle by way of photographs and videos. Boats of all sizes, people of various nations and cultures, and the Venetian urban stage form a scenery which hardly has its equivalent in the entire world. Isn't this another example of site-specificity?[4]

3 On the overlooked yet foundational Venice phenomenon of piling, see Henrik Reeh, *The Pilings of Venice* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2023).

4 A photographic exploration of the view from the Rialto Bridge overlooking Canal Grande but also of the other visitors on the outer staircase (facing South) is provided in Max Farina, *Rivus Altus* (Milan: Studio Farina Zerozero, 2016).

FIG. 2 Venice, a city for pedestrian practices – on bridges, too.
Source: Photo by the author.

4. Sailing and walking – goods and human beings

Inside the so-called *sestiere* (sixths), i.e. the neighbourhoods of Venice, a structural division prevails between the transportation of goods and products which takes place by boat on canals, and the movements of human beings who depend on pedestrian practices in the alleys (*calle*), or across squares (*campi*) and numerous bridges.

It is as if human work cannot be hidden as in other cities; here, all sorts of deliveries are done by hand. The fact that open boats are operated by human beings makes Venice appear as a living and working city, and not only as a tourist setting. How can such a complex city be serviced that smoothly by modest-sized boats only?

On the other hand, the city is a place for pedestrians; the many bridges make bicycling irrelevant, and, instead, people are simply walking along complex itineraries, either in their own neighbourhoods or to destinations in distant parts of the city. (Fig. 2) Taking a *vaporetto* may sometimes help, but such vessels sail in the lagoon and in the Grand Canal only.

Altogether, Venice is a low-tech and body-animated cityscape, and one soon forgets about automobile traffic. The absence of cars is just another site-specific quality among the many that make Venice an extraordinary place to live.

5. Cruise ships in the urban lagoon

Given the importance of the human scale in Venice urban space, it is an astonishing moment when ten- or fifteen-storey cruise ships appear in the lagoon, passing in front of the Doge's Palace and all the way through the Bacino di San Marco towards the exits into the Adriatic Sea. The visual contrasts are even more shocking when perceived from the inside of the

urban fabric; suddenly the perspectives of the lagoon are interrupted while over-sized ships slowly sail by in what seems to be a montage of incompatible scales.

FIG. 3 A cruise ship leaving Venice, guided by pilot ships, around 6 pm., October 2016. Source: Photo by the author.

On the other hand, the cruise ships leaving also put the city into relief. The ritual departures used to take place every day before sunset. Pilot boats pull the cruise liners which are simply too big to sail on their own, through the delicate fairways of the Giudecca Canal and further toward the strip of the Lido. (Fig. 3) The man-made infrastructures – some fairways are about 15 meters deep – are considered responsible for the frequent and increasing floodings of Venice. To the non-informed and naive observer, however, the cruise ships themselves are amongst the site-specificities of Venice – a city which has always been a port for international commerce as well as for migration in and out of Europe. During the daily departure of cruise ships, the Venice lagoon reappeared as a harbor basin of global traveling and migration.

After many years of criticism and public debate, the travelers' ritual of leaving Venice on a cruise ship sailing by the Piazza San Marco seems to be a thing of the past. Still, I vividly recall the performance of pilot boats on Monday June 3, 2019, redoing their own moves from the day before, when a gigantic cruise ship went out of control and crashed into a tour ship moored along the Zattere quay in the Dorsoduro neigborhood of Venice.

6. When the locals are leaving

The name of *Zattere* applies to the southern shore or quay where tree trunks used to arrive by waterway to Venice from the woods on the mainland. Today Zattere is a privileged place for watching the heterogeneous traffic of boats and ships on the large Giudecca Canal. From wooden platforms built in and above the water, little restaurants and ice cream

terraces make you feel a gentle breeze and invite you to watch the setting sun and the fading light.

After sunset, the question arises how to return home at the other end of historic Venice. *Vaporetti* are parting in all directions; but the most efficient solution seems to be a particular express line (*linea 2*) which makes a detour by the Santa Lucia train station but, later on, has only one stop in the Canal Grande before arriving at the Rialto Bridge.

FIG. 4 A *vaporetto* harbor bus in the evening darkness, after having left its suburban passengers at the Venice train station. Source: Photo by the author.

In the early evening, the *vaporetti* passengers are different. Whereas tourists and visitors are dominant during the daytime and make the *vaporetti* appear as leisure boats, the local crowds of employees are leaving Venice after finishing work in shops and other services. At 6:30 or 7 in the evening, certain *vaporetto* lines function as mass transit to the mainland where the suburbia of Venice is located.

All of a sudden, Venice looks like a working city like others, with daily routines and social layerings which extend the urban territories to the Terraferma in Mestre and beyond. Only a few passengers leave the *vaporetto* at the social housing blocks of the Giudecca island inside Venice. Many more get off at the Tronchetto stop with its huge parking lot, but also at Piazzale Roma where buses are leaving, or at Ferrovia, the train station, which has been connecting Venice to the rest of Europe for more than a century and a half. (Fig. 4)

The romantic view of vernacular Venice is slightly altered by a sense of social reality which reveals Venice as a working city with ordinary people, embedded in modern urban and suburban materialities. Traveling on this *vaporetto* line at night makes Venice stand out as a mysterious and extensive urban harborscape, permeated by a profound darkness with sparse electric illuminations only. Isn't this another site-specific feature worthwhile being noted?

7. Hidden harbor basins

The distance between stops allows the *vaporetti* to adopt a regular and faster speed than in the Canal Grande where *vaporetti* as a means of transportation are also platforms for the tranquil contemplation of life and façades. Between Zattere and the railway station, one gets an intense feeling of sailing as a continuous movement on water. On the other hand, the quays are quite far away, and it is difficult to get a detailed impression of life and spaces there. Yet the difference from the historic Venice in the traditional *sestiere* is striking; the *vaporetto* lines to the train station pass through quasi-industrial zones where all sorts of utilitarian boats for maintenance or for garbage are moored at night, next to long lines of boats belonging to the police or to other public authorities.

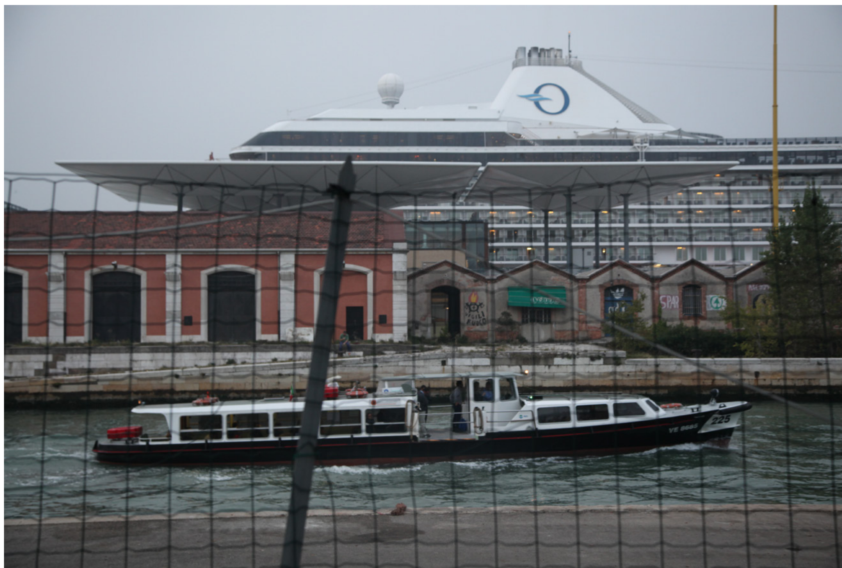

FIG. 5 A *vaporetto* harbor bus on its way to the train station of Venice, passing in front of cruise ships in a remote position, but still part of the Venice cityscape and its distinctive urban reality. Source: Photo by the author.

In addition, this *vaporetto* itinerary provides encounters with enormous cruise ships which stay in Venice overnight. (Fig. 5) Typically, three or four boats lie along the quays of Venice, starting at inaccessible areas prolonging the Zattere, which is the place for relatively modest boats. Real ocean liners are resting either in the Canale Colombuola (in passing, one only gets a glimpse of the back of a huge cruise shop) or in the Bacino delle Stazione Marittima. The *vaporetto* passes through the latter harbor bassin and confronts its passengers, not only with the immensity of cruise ships but also with harbor landscapes which look radically different from pre-modern Venetian islands and islets. Underneath the bridges linking Venice to the mainland, uncanny feelings may even occur.

Traveling by *vaporetto* in the early evenings, one sometimes gets the impression to discover a functional and social 'backstage' or 'offstage' of the city. This industrial and ordinary zone seems to defy or even criticize the authority of 'frontstage' Venice. Yet the harbor zones also contribute to making the city's frontstage – historic Venice of the *sestiere* – appear

possible and, thus, easier to understand. Venice is more than a fairy tale which has turned real.

As everywhere else in the world, one shouldn't substitute the tourist landscape of Venice for the city (let alone the city region) as a whole. After all, the labourious harbor zones represent a more dynamic and complex socio-cultural reality than the city of tourism usually makes us believe.

8. Terrains vagues and wrapped up cars

Venice's cityscapes of industrial and functional routines are neither easy to find nor to access. Unless pedestrians really decide to explore these areas by foot, and know how to get there, they would never come across the large-scale territories of the city. Walking around next to the cruise port feels like leaving the city, although this is still Venice-in-the-lagoon, yet in a peripheral version that features train tracks and car parks.

While every single square meter counts in historic Venice, these external areas display huge parking lots which look like genuine terrains vagues; one feels that once upon a time something else has been going on here, and that new functions could soon be added. In fact, a competition was organized and a project by Italian architect Marco Galantino has been selected, just before the global financial crisis in 2008. In the mid-2010s, however, an extensive and little occupied parking field is all you see. (Fig. 6) Framed by a highway, it is traversed by an elevated monorail people mover which runs back and forth between the Venice railway station and two strategic places in the harbor zones where tourists and commuters arrive in or leave the city.

FIG. 6 Car parking in a car free city: wrapped up or ready to drive.
Source: Photo by the author.

Below the people mover on stilts, grass and wild trees are growing, thus adding a romantic and natural touch to the industrial leftover. A road lined by two rows of trees recalls a traditional road to the cruise harbor. Now it

serves as a running path for a few joggers. On fenced off parking lots next to it, cars are dressed up in protective canvas covers which turn them into exhibition objects. Or the cars may simply have been parked on a long-term basis, unless they are soon to be shipped to remote destinations. For the visiting pedestrian, this road is a *cul-de-sac*: a museum of out-dated territories and signs of fading industrialism.

9. Industrial archaeology

This is indeed offstage Venice, a part of the city where a few automobiles are passing, and trains may still be running, while the warehouses along the tracks look like industrial ruins. Pedestrians venturing into this urban zone whose infrastructure is disconnected from the rest of Venice, discover an industrial canal which at first looks private and sealed off, just as the quays are inaccessible. Construction materials are stored there, ready to be loaded on larger boats which are moored along the quay. An old military tank behind a barbed wire fence is bearing testimony to a previous stage of industrial modernity. (Fig. 7)

FIG. 7 Site-specificity with urban potentials? Just as parts of the Venice Arsenale remain inaccessible military areas, an old tank testifies to the fenced off sections of canals and basins which link spectacular Venice to the city of utilitarian infrastructures. Source: Photo by the author.

To the traveler, this outskirt territory of Venice is an unexpected and exotic place which provides an everyday commentary to frontstage Venice. However, behind the old serial warehouses on the other side of the canal, tall and elegant cruise terminals are already complete, built during recent decades in order to update the conditions of cruise tourism. Nearly two million visitors are arriving and leaving Venice by cruise ship every year (2012), and in the 21st century the economic role of such harbor activities is increasing rapidly, as Wolfgang Scheppe and students have

documented in *Migropolis: Venice – Atlas of a Global Situation*.[5] But why should this commercial way of using Venetian land remain undisputed? Wide *terrains vagues* are still waiting to be reinterpreted in an urban-cultural perspective.

10. Authentic vs. industrial Venice: Negotiating the remains of modernity

The full autonomy of Venice is a history limited to a pre-modern past. Having lost its political independence with Napoleon's occupation in 1797, Venice was attached to the mainland by way of infrastructures such as train lines in the mid-19th century and, in the fascist 1930s, by a car bridge, later named *Ponte della Libertà*. In economic and human terms, Venice is linked to the Terraferma, and to the world beyond the Lagoon.

Yet, cars (as well as trains) still look alien in Venice. They are only present in the harbor areas, next to the cruise ships. Many of these areas are the property of institutional investors, primarily the *Porto di Venezia*, the local port authority. Just as the harbor territories are part of the functional and economic totality of the city, it would be worthwhile asking to what extent they also constitute a layer of modern and industrial site-specificity in Venice. Does the local industrial heritage have a contribution to make to the self-consciousness of contemporary Venice? Considered as supplementary elements of urban reality, the harbor zones might promote a less iconic and clichéd image of Venice as a whole. (Fig. 8)

FIG. 8 Architectural heritage of industrialism, behind barbed wire. Source: Photo by the author.

5 Wolfgang Scheppe, ed., *Migropolis: Venice – Atlas of a Global Situation* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2009), 210-331.

11. A dialogue between offstage Venice and the frontstage city

Instead of being used solely as a territory for cruise tourism, or for temporary parking lots, the harbor zones may some day become part of the public city. Just as the Venetian military area of the *Arsenale* is being integrated into the accessible city (from which it was excluded), the industrial harbor areas at the opposite end of Venice may eventually become publicly accessible.

If they were joining urban public space instead of being isolated from it, the hitherto monocultural harbor areas of Venice might benefit from the site-specific qualities they already possess. In reality, Venice is a multi-layered urban reality to be experienced on site, but it is also integrated into a global system of cultural and economic tourism. This system is both maintaining and transforming Venice, not simply elimininating and neutralizing it. In this context, the site-specific qualities of modern industrial territories constitute an archive which may inform and strengthen the site-specific spatial and cultural vocabulary of Venice in the 21st century.

FIG. 9 Backstage Venice, a working city. Source: Photo by the author.

12. Concluding remarks: Site-specific qualities in generic reality

Site-specificity is present at all levels of the traveler's encounter with Venice, be it in the view from above, when the typical form of urban space is first revealed, or in the experience of everyday practices during prolonged sailing in the lagoon and in the Canal Grande. The essential role of walking in the urban districts, and the fact that cargo is transported by boat into the local canals, also constitute site-specific features – just as the cruise ships' previous, ritual departure from the city in the late afternoon may be considered one.

Similarly, the *vaporetto* express lines with important stops at the peripheral parking lots, as well as at the bus and train stations, reveal the social and cultural reality of people who do work in Venice but reside on the mainland, in Mestre or elsewhere. Such *vaporetto* lines are primarily used by local citizens and employees but also allow the urban visitors to encounter certain concealed zones of Venice where industrial dimensions and functional modernity are present, sometimes as a leftover, at other times in recently updated shapes. Compared to the apparently authentic frontstage of tourism and culture, this is backstage or offstage Venice. (Fig. 9) In a certain sense, however, industrial harbor zones are site-specific, too; it would certainly be hard to understand frontstage Venice without taking them into account.

The Venetian situation of urban site-specificity may be summarized as follows:

1° The everyday coexistence of 'authentic' and 'modern' Venice challenges the opposition between a local and site-specific city on the one hand side, and a generic and destructive reality, related to cruise ships, on the other. Front stage and off stage Venice are – and might be recognized as – reciprocal.

2° The role of hidden and peripheral harbor zones and parking areas is central in the ongoing development of Venice. These zones – as well as the city as a whole – might gain from being treated, not as sealed off territories but as public and civic space.

3° Just as site-specific qualities stand out at many levels of the historic city, industrial Venice is waiting to be explored. After all, the 'modern' elements in the 'offstage' city allow Venice to counter the nostalgic dominance of its own 'authentic' and 'frontstage' image. In this way, harbor areas may inform a process of urban anamnesis and promote Venice as a city in which a dynamic memory of modernity takes place.

Notes of transition

The observations from Venice teach us how site-specificity is experienced at many scales and in unexpected areas of the actual cityscape. A visit in renovated Marseille, after the city's performance as Cultural Capital of Europe 2013, may allow us to elaborate on the following question: "What does it mean to *appreciate* site-specific qualities?"

Basically, the verb "appreciate" indicates a positive approach to reality. Such an appreciative judgment may imply qualitative as well as quantitative components. As we shall see, aesthetic, experiential, self reflexive but also economic factors become relevant, depending on the situation in which the object of attention is perceived and interpreted. Do these factors add up to a coherent human experience? In fact, observations from Marseille suggest how a sensory encounter with a place may eventually promote a dynamic determination of site-specificity.

II. Encountering Marseille – Appreciating Site-Specific Qualities

> Marseilles, a dazzling amphitheater, rises around the rectangle of the old harbor. The three shores of the square paved with sea, whose depth cuts into the city, are lined with rows of façades, each one like the next. [...] The churches point to the square as the vanishing point of all perspectives, and the still-virgin hills face it as well. Rarely has such an audience ever been assembled around an arena.
>
> Siegfried Kracauer [6]

En route for site-specific harbor transformation by way of design

Along the Mediterranean, things don't always happen as one expects them to do. Heading for Marseille, the traveler's primary destinations are the cultural cathedrals erected for 2013 when the city was European Capital of Europe, as well as the Euromed 1 and 2 harbor development zones north of Marseille's Vieux Port (Old Port). Even though the visitor wishes to take a look at central Marseille, there will only be time to do so be in passing.

FIG. 10 Despite the roof above, the rain enters below. Source: Photo by the author.

6 Siegfried Kracauer, "The Bay" (1926), trans. Thomas Y. Levin, in S. Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 37. Translated from: "Marseille, ein blendendes Amphitheater, baut sich um das Rechteck des Alten Hafens auf. Den meergepflasterten Platz, der mit seiner Tiefe in die Stadt einschneidet, säumen auf den drei Uferseiten Fassadenbänder gleichförmig ein. [...] Auf ihn, als den Fluchtort aller Perspektiven, sind die Kirchen ausgerichtet, ihm die noch unbedeckten Hügel zugewandt. Ein solches Publikum ist kaum je um eine Arena versammelt gewesen." Siegfried Kracauer, "Die Bai" (1926), in S. Kracauer, *Das Ornament der Masse* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1963), 11.

Alas, arriving in Marseille, it is raining, heavily and steadily. The traveler's umbrella will not suffice; his or her shoes are going to be wet through after a few minutes. A flaneur's approach to the central cityscape is excluded in advance. Fortunately, the metro and a bus line are there to bring the visitor *sain et sauf* to the sites of cultural harbor transformation.

Under the intense rain, however, getting from the metro exit to the bus stop at the Vieux Port is a serious challenge. As cascades of rain start invading the metro hallway, people simply have to leave. Outside, a sizeable freestanding roof provides a refuge on the way between the metro and the bus stops. To be sure, this roof is not watertight at all. Still, this is the place which, at the end of the journey, happens to stand out as a site-specific urban quality in contemporary Marseille. Compared to the spectacular transformations in the industrial harbor areas, the traveler intuitively appreciates this collective shelter, and in the following the shelter shall exemplify the ways and stages through which we come to discover and verbalize site-specific qualities in urban space.

Three or four ways of appreciating site-specific qualities

Under a mid-September deluge, the visitor's encounter with this particular bus shelter in Marseille actualizes several layers inhabiting the experience of *appreciating site-specific qualities*. As we shall see, the verb "appreciate" covers a series of meanings. Illustrated by experiences in the old harbor of Marseille, these semantic layers may, in turn, invite us to reflect upon the ways in which we discover everyday site-specificity.

FIG. 11 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 1. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 12 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 2. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 13 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 3. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 14 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 4. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 15 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 5. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 16 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 6. Source: Photo by the author.

FIG. 17 Panorama of Le Vieux Port in Marseille, photographed clockwise from the public shelter, # 7. Source: Photo by the author.

1. ”To recognize” an urban harbor site: le Vieux Port

According to the definition proposed in *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, ”appreciate” first of all means ”To recognize the quality, significance, or magnitude of” something[7]. In this way, ”to appreciate” implies an act of recognition; a person appreciating something affirms the significance of the phenomenon in question. An example of such a recognition is provided by the reactions first aroused in urban citizens and visitors hiding under the roof in Marseille on that excessively rainy morning.

There you are, thirty, forty, fifty people or more under the rain which is invasive. The daylight is fading to such an extent that one can hardly see the other people present, let alone the surroundings. However, your primary occupation is to remain dry which is not an easy task.

Persons with an umbrella are safe, but only as long as the ground remains more or less dry. Soon, there is hardly a place to stand anymore; the rain traverses the modules of the ceiling. Slowly but steadily the water covers the granite slabs and runs across the area covered by the roof, looking for a way to escape. It runs towards the harbor bassin, the basin of le Vieux Port de Marseille which starts just a few meters away. The people under the roof are situated with their bodies and minds inside the framework of an urban harbor which is surrounded by large-scale walls on three sides, while the Mediterranean is accessible on the fourth.

FIG. 18 During the rain, a street vendor in the public shelter of Le Vieux Port, Marseille. Source: Photo by the author.

7 Anne H. Soukhanov, ed. *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Languague* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992 [third ed.]), 90.

The experience of standing there is less a visual and contemplative one than a simultaneously tactical and tactile challenge. At a certain time, a visitor wonders whether a sound recording wouldn't be the most appropriate way to represent the intensity of the rain. Indeed, a smartphone willingly captures the soundscape of falling rain, while the wind is beating against the membrane of the built-in microphone.

2. ”To be fully aware of or sensitive to” urban culture under a leaking roof – echoing critical theory

The second definition in *The American Heritage Dictionary* explains ”to appreciate” as ”To be fully aware of or sensitive to; realize”.[8] More than a simple act of recognition (conscious or not), this semantic layer cites a degree of sensory and mental presence that is not necessarily shared by all the visitors during the half an hour many of them spend under the roof, before their bus lines finally arrive. During this period, people slowly move around and thus come to sense the considerable dimensions of the monumental bus shelter – about 50 by 20 meters, i.e. quite long but not very broad. Given the height of the ceiling which may be six or eight meters, all are not that well protected from the rain and the wind. (Fig. 11-17)

On the other hand, the collective shelter provides a 360-degree panorama. This urban panorama entices the photographic gazes of people waiting but only those with a light camera (or a smartphone) in the right hand and an umbrella in the left may have a chance in their clockwise *tour de force* against the elements of wind and water. Moreover, small digital cameras make reality look much brighter than it actually is. In fact, the day itself is so dark at eleven o'clock that the setting looks unnatural and recalls an exceptional eclipse of the sun, if not a local apocalypse.

Whilst remaining on the outlook for the buses that continue not to arrive on the east side of the urban pavilion, one realizes how close the harbor basin actually is on the west side of the shelter. As a matter of fact, the dark ceiling of the pavilion not only reflects the people standing below it but makes them reappear in inverted positions. The black reflective surface also invites the persons waiting under the roof to see parts of the water surface in the harbor basin itself.

Immersed in this obscured place, you vaguely notice the other people around you. You may especially notice an elderly man with a cap, trying to sell nuts in little plastic bags which are displayed on a basket tray. (Fig. 18) This figure recalls another Marseille vendor and the entire spirit of urban culture depicted by cultural analyst and theoretician Siegfried Kracauer in the late 1920's.

8 *Ibid.*, 90.

FIG. 19 Human presence, upside down – displayed in the polished steel ceiling of the public shelter at Le Vieux Port of Marseille. Source: Photo by the author.

The last chapter of Kracauer's autobiographical novel in German, *Ginster: Written by himself*[9] is set in Marseille (and no longer in the Germany of the First World War, as is the case of the remainder of the book). The protagonist's encounter with the Mediterranean harbor city entails an extatic dissolution of prevailing reality principles – that of architecture as wage labor in the life of Ginster, but also that of the coherent and stable urban space in Marseille.[10]

A dissolution of apparently immutable powers prefigures new realities. This way of challenging some dominant institutions is already hinted at in Kracauer's 1926-essay "Stand-Up Bars in the South", from which the first epigraph of the present text stems. In this essay, Kracauer compares urban improvisation – essential in his sole definition of urban quality[11] – to the experience of sailing away from safe harbors along the French Mediterranean, from Marseille to Nice. In the minds of intellectuals from the interwar period, such as German philosopher and urban writer Walter Benjamin (1892-1940), Marseille is the quintessential city of improvisation. Like Kracauer, Benjamin is sensitive to the fragmenting practices of people. There are disruptive and creative possibilities linked to this Marseille lifestyle which appears to be both spatially alien to and, not least, qualitatively different from the Protestant or assimilated Jewish traditions of the North. Here, in the South, city and harbor merge in an intensely urban

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9 Siegfried Kracauer, *Ginster. Von ihm selbst geschrieben* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1990 [1928]), 229-240.

10 For an analysis of Marseille in Kracauer's *Ginster*, see Henrik Reeh, *Ornaments of the Metropolis: Siegfried Kracauer and Modern Urban Culture* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 2004), 73-82.

11 Henrik Reeh, "Fragmentation, Improvisation, and Urban Quality: A Heterotopian Motif in Siegfried Kracauer", in *Chora 3: Intervals in the Philosophy of Architecture*, ed. Alberto Pérez-Gómez and Stephen Parcell (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999), 157-177.

culture which, in those days, had deep repercussions in the writings of various intellectuals, domestic and foreign alike.

3. ”To admire greatly”: a work of urban design – a piece of signature architecture

A third layer of meaning is germinating in the verb ”appreciate”, since the word also signifies ”To admire greatly; value”.[12] Apart from recognition and sensitivity, the act of appreciating equally signalizes *admiration*.

”To recognize” and ”to realize” something may thus bring us ”to admire” a particular phenomenon. However, does this progression and intensification (recognize – realize – admire) make sense in the Marseille harbor? Is it true that the visitor under the shelter not only ”recognizes” and becomes more ”fully aware of and sensitive” to the urban qualities of the elevated roof (as suggested by the two preceding definitions of ”appreciate”), but that he or she further comes to ”admire” and ”value” the urban shelter as an essential element of urban-cultural design? In short, does the traveler get access to the third stage of appreciation as smoothly as he or she passes from the initial recognition (while being immersed in the rain and the sound of it) to the more elaborated representation (by way of photographs and sound recordings)?

Such a rationalisation is probably too simple to be true. Indeed, people quit as soon as possible in order to visit the major sites of cultural tourism and urban architecture in the transformed parts of Marseille’s industrial harbors. Sooner or later, the bus arrives and brings travelers to the cultural cathedrals, recently built in more distant harbor territories.

Yet it is possible to return to this place in the Vieux Port by way of memory and images. Once the heavy rain and the dark clouds are gone, giving way to an marvelously blue sky, one recalls the urban roof as a sympathetic and modest way of bringing a diversity of people together. (Fig. 19) But does this souvenir elevate the verb ”appreciate”– meaning ”To admire greatly” – into the appropriate name for a visitor’s experience under the urban roof? Again, such a positive judgment is premature.

Further reflections are necessary, and they eventually occur. Retrospectively, a color image, reproduced on a free Marseille city map (offered by the Galeries Lafayette department store), makes travelers realize that their sense of sight was indeed limited during the extraordinary darkness of the torrential shower. The photograph on the map shows the harbor pavilion as it stands out under a sunny sky. Whereas the ceiling of the urban bus shelter looked like black varnish during the rain, the photograph reveals that the urban pavilion is built with one single construction material: polished stainless steel. It is as if the two images of the

12 *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, ibid.

Vieux Port refer to radically different realities. Compared to the souvenir of obscurity and rain, the sunny photograph on the map represents a reality of its own. Here, the image of a stainless steel construction is a shocking one; reflecting the human bodies standing or passing below it, the ceiling functions like a gigantic mirror which duplicates the image of your fellow citizens as well as that of you yourself.

In the absence of a caption indicating functions and authors of the shelter, one may reasonably expect this minimalist building to have been designed by local architects. In reality, it represents the contrary of vernacular urban design. A search on the Internet reveals that the architecture is due to British *starchitect* Norman Foster, a global master builder. Although it may look simple yet purified, this building constitutes the strategic piece of architecture in the general redesign and make-over of the Vieux Port by Michel Desvignes, currently one of the most *en vogue* urban landscape architects in France.

Given the role of the shelter as a local citymark but also the worldwide fame of its architect, some users probably heard about this reflective building. Local citizens and even visitors must have seen it on their way through the city. But in reality, many people haven't really noticed; their destinations and motivations lie elsewhere, and time is limited. Citizens or travelers don't necessarily appreciate or "admire" the urban bus shelter in the Vieux Port "greatly". Nonetheless this pavilion – branded as "l'*ombrière*": the shade-maker – is a centerpiece of the still ongoing modernization of urban spaces and traffic around Marseille's Vieux Port.

Despite the limited degree of contemplation among most urbanites, the urban visitor maintains a basic sympathy via à vis the *ombrière* at the inner harbor, which – in Siegfried Kracauer's view, quoted above (in the epigraph of part II) – is constitutive of Marseille as a city. Having lost many of its functions, the Vieux Port nonetheless remains a decisive figure in the urban-cultural appreciation of Marseille. From a mainstream point of view, this harbor city may appear run-down and poor. Still, Marseille has long been recognized as a place with powerful site-specific qualities.

4. Appreciation and prices: "To raise in value and price, especially over time"

According to *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, there is yet another meaning of the verb "appreciate"; this time a quantitative and economic dimension is introduced that so far has been absent from our approach to site-specific urban qualities. In this fourth context, "appreciate" is defined as "To raise in value or price, especially over time".[13] The quantitative definition is even cited as the fundamental one in the

13 Anne H. Soukhanov, ed., *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language*, op. cit., 90

French version of the word, ”apprécier”. An etymologically informed dictionary, *Le petit Robert* links ”apprécier” to the basic act of ”determining the price or the value of something”, a usage which dates back to 1401: ”Déterminer le prix, la valeur de qqch [quelquechose]”.[14] Moreover, the verb is derived from ”pretium” in Latin, i. e. from ”price” – which is also contained in the Latin verb ”appretiare”, translated as ”evaluate” (”évaluer”). A similar relation between ”appreciate” and ”price-setting” is reflected in the Danish expression ”at sætte pris på” which is among the first translations of ”appreciate” proposed by B. Kjærulff Nielsen's *English-Danish* dictionary.[15]

In the documents available about contemporary harbor transformation in Marseille, there are few references to the price of this '*ombrière*' which, on that torrential September morning, was a welcoming but leaking mega-size umbrella in the Vieux Port. Norman Foster being the architect, the budget has barely been low. In fact, the sum I came across is so substantial that it might also include the costs of the entirely redesigned square at the inner part of Marseille's Vieux Port.

FIG. 20 Harbor and highway in Marseille, far from Le Vieux Port of the city.Source: Photo by the author.

In retrospect, the visitor's encounter with Marseille's *ombrière* under an obscured and rainy sky nicely illustrates the fundamental layers of ”appreciate” as defined by *The American Heritage Dictionary*. Soon the spontaneous recognition of the *ombrière* as an urban shelter against the rain gives way to an attention paid to the social and cultural patterns of the place, as well as to the visual and auditory qualities of the weather and the urban sourroundings. The soundscape and the visual panorama even become the objects of recording and photography. (Fig. 20)

14 Robert, Paul, and Alain Rey, *Le petit Robert: dictionnaire alphabétique et analogique de la langue française* (Paris: Dictionnaire Le Robert, 1970), 77.

15 Nielsen, B. Kjærulff, *Engelsk Dansk Ordbog* (København: Gyldendal, 1980 [1964]), 49.

Little by little, recognition and attention prepare the ground for genuine admiration. Thanks to a surprising tourist map photograph, Marseille's *ombrière* is revealed as a mirroring centerpiece in the new urban layout of the Vieux Port. For those who "apprecitate" and want to "put a price on" the polished and reflective *ombrière*, the financial investment testifies to the fact that Marseille has attempted to go a step further into the global economy of tourism and culture.

Still, the Marseille *ombrière* in the Vieux Port fulfills important civic functions. Its urban potential is confirmed when people are gathering there during the torrent of September 2014, as well as they did a few months later when France reacted against the terrorist massacre at Charlie Hebdo in February 2015. For the Marseille demonstration of sorrow and solidarity with the victims, people simply joined under the *ombrière* of the renovated Vieux Port. From a local and an activist point of view, the *ombrière* has thus been appropriated in practical and symbolic terms; it has obtained the status of an urban place which soon acquired site-specific significance.

Conclusions

The present study addresses the discovery of site-specific qualities in present-day Venice and Marseille. Both are classic harbor cities, and their links to tourism are increasing in the age of cultural planning and consumption. Accordingly, the observer's viewpoint is that of a traveling visitor who is looking for site-specificity in harbor areas as a basis for urban transformation.

Two series of results have been obtained. Venice proves to be site-specific at all levels of the frontstage city, as well as in the offstage of its industrious areas. Instead of rejecting the latter as alien to Venice, the harbor zones should be recognized as a possible reservoir of urban site-specificity. If these areas become truly public, they may in turn add a modern relief to the contemporary mainstream staging of Venice.

The observations of site-specificity in Marseille focus on a particular place in a precise situation: the collective bus shelter in the Vieux Port during a torrential shower. Here, sensory and reflective processes contribute to the researcher's appreciation of site-specific qualities. Reflecting the semantic layers of the verb "appreciate", *recognition* and *sensitivity* are progressively deployed on site, testifying to the practical and socio-aesthetic qualities of the urban roof in the harbor. *Admiration*, a third semantic layer of "appreciate", results from an interpretive exploration of the Marseille *ombrière* which happens to be an all-reflective urban mirror, designed by Norman Foster and Partners in London. Altogether, this tripartite process of appreciation documents the ways in which the researcher's sensitivity co-informs the scholarly designation of site-specific features in the city.

FIG. 21 Source: Photo by the author.

The actual appreciation of site-specific qualities reflects the fact that the scholar studying Venice and Marseille is also *a traveling visitor* who transgresses the role of a distant professional. Bodily and mentally present on site, the researcher is affected by sensory impressions and socio-cultural exchanges. Irresistably, this reciprocity between human presence and the environment transforms urban space from cool objectivity into a matter of lived life, of aesthetics. (Fig. 21) As long as the visitor's brief passage on site is critically reconsidered, such impressions and experiences may strengthen the urban-cultural reflections on site-specificity – a realm of ambiguous contributions to urban aesthetics.

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MAIN SECTION

Public Art: a Review. Social and Political Practices

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ABSTRACT
Public art covers a range of phenomena in which aesthetics and urban life intersect. Public art introduces a broad of practices that opened to a number of interpretations regards their contributions to the urban environment, functions as a key factor in a city's regeneration policies, and is the primary fuel of urban capital production and accumulation today. The article focuses on the art practices that declare ethical commitments with the social-political sphere, promoting participatory and collaboratively-led activities, converging thus with the dynamics of activist practices. The article reconsiders the role of public art as a socio-political agent, taking into account the timeless self-defining and self-regulating autonomy of visual arts, which claims the right to set specific norms of cultural inclusion and exclusion in the public space, reducing thus the multiculturalism of urban life to the restrictive framework of a one-dimensional culture. The paper elaborates on some aspects of the discussions about the social-political engagements of public art, developing a brief discussion of some of the most current themes emerging from it.

KEYWORDS
Public art practices; Participatory art; Art activism; Public art & gentrification

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Introduction

The current debate about public art focuses on the issue of sociopolitical engagement, which declares the capacity of art to create "a feeling of connectedness and belonging, to organize skills of civic involvement, and also to invigorate groups (often marginalized groups) to explore and express individual and shared identities."[1] Sociopolitical engagement has become the foundation for an ethic of care, "the unifying reason of public art for treating the urban environment with a great sense of responsibility."[2] In their report on the impact of public art on American cities, Ann Marcusen and Anne Gadwa summarize that public art"reflects the neighborhood, animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves the viability of local business and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.[3]

Public art we encounter in our time is quite different from the phenomenon of public art of the 70s, which was driven by giving a voice to those who umpire it and providing a breath to all those who pass it as it speaks from the streets, as the artist and activist Judith Baca has pointed out."[4] The last decades, terms like "socially engaged" "participatory art," "collaborative art," "useful art," "new-genre public art," and "social practice," among others used in scholarly criticism in the art world,[5] supports several practices through an ongoing process of integrating concepts and tools paving the way for the convergence of public art and social practice, within the ambiguous assumptions of socio-political activism.[6] Also, under the term Socially Engaged Art Criticism, art practices establish new relationships between the art domain and other fields of knowledge production, from urbanism to environmentalism, from experimental education to participatory design, according to the art historian, editor, and founder of the journal Field, Grant Kester.[7] In other words, public art is an amalgam of forms and contexts that produce unstable scenarios of sociopolitical applications.

However, the association of socially engaged, participating, or collectivism with public art is not self-evident, as many of these art practices have been produced informally (in terms of production, financial management,

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1 Katherine Melcher, et al. *Community-Built: Art, Construction, Preservation, and Plac*e. (New York: Routledge, 2017), 121.

2 Ronald Lee Fleming, T*he Art of Placemaking: Interpreting Community through Public Art and Urban Design* (New York: Merrell Publishers, 2007), 28.

3 Ann Markusen, Anne Gadwa, *Creative Placemaking* (Washington, DC, 2010), 4.

4 Judith F. Baca,"Whose Monument Where? Public Art in a many-cultured society," in *Mapping the Terrain. New Genre Public Art* ed. by Suzanne Lacy (Seattle, Washington: Bay Press, 1995), 131-138.

5 Castellano, Carlos Garrido, *Art Activism for an anticolonial Future* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2021), 3.

6 Boris Groy, On Art Activism, *e-flux journal* #5 (June 2011). https://www.e-flux.com/journal/56/60343/on-art-activism/

7 FIELD: A Journal of Socially-Engaged Art Criticism, https://field-journal.com/about.

and presentation) developed at the margins of the institutions or even as a reaction to them. This is the point where the contradiction of sociopolitical engagement in public art arises. Public art, "fitting comfortably on a traditional, romantic notion of artists in their garrets,"[8] is supported by institutions that legitimize its role in urban beautification, making it more attractive and seductive. This role of art transforms any sociopolitical engagement toward the direction of its aesthetic form. The moment art operates to notions of aestheticization and spectacularity, any political art action turns into a spectacle, as art historian Boris Groys has pointed out.[9]

In this regard, public art cannot be understood as a coherent art term corresponding to a multinational society i.e. to various social and cultural environments, or as a specific art expression that would justify urban development or refinement policies. Where such a thing is justified, it is nothing more than an ideological pretext that establishes a stable cultural mechanism, which replaces the free play of competitive (inter)reactions,[10] in the terms of Michel Foucault.

Speaking for public art – from the most traditional to its most contemporary versions – we can identify it with the dynamics of the production of public sphere conditions in the urban environment. Public art is a means to express the self-evident values of a city interwoven with its symbolic values necessary for the (re)production of urban life. Synonymous with the concept of place, public art gives local clarity and creates interactive relationships with its environment. However, based on its current discourses and applications, important questions arise regarding the nature of its public character. Public art has established itself as an institutional art category with uncertain context drawn on the constant exchange process of disciplinary concepts and the adoption of sociopolitical means and practices. On the one hand, the term is used as an agent to create a positive image of the place for the benefit of urban regeneration that identifies the field with the processes of urban beautification and economic viability. On the other hand, it is defined in sociological terms as a cultural intervention that organizes a sociopolitical system of relations since it incorporates practices produced into contexts that transcend the limits of the art context itself, proposing models of collectivity and ideas of access and participation. As a result, public art has tended not to represent the materiality of the culture where we live anymore, having transformed into an apparatus of direct social intervention that gives surplus value in the urban environment, suggesting itself as a collaborative arena with cultural institutions, governments, and public/non-profit/private urban and economic sector organizations. Based on the words art and public that compose the terminology, the only indisputable public art should be the

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8 Anty Pratt, "The cultural and creative industries: new engines for the city?," in *Culture: City*, ed. by Wilfried Wang (Berlin: Academie der Künste, 2013), 37.

9 Boris Groy, "On Art Activism."

10 Michel Foucault, "*The subject and power*," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. 4, (1982): 777-795.

right of all social groups to be co-expressed and represented in the public (common) space, either participating in the dominant cultural patterns or diverging from them.

The first thing to discuss about public art is perhaps that it is a verbal construction of so-called postmodernism and thus should not be seen simply as a particular genre of art but as a means of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices that cannot be studied outside its relation to the mechanisms of exploitation and domination.[11] Taking this as a point of reference, the following article will attempt to explore the contexts that explicitly differentiate the contemporary applications of public art from the terms of their association with the architecture of previous periods, "when architects jumped between different scales and forms of representation, while artists focused on the intimate quality of space and materials."[12] As the article will argue, public art in its contemporary applications, driven by its proximity to cultural institutions and its engagements with the social-political sphere, exposes its regenerative role in the public space, functioning as an agent of "cultural governmentality."[13]

The following text is divided in three parts. The first part examines the concept of participation automatically associated with a democratic version of art, promoting the art practice as the performance of social action· that of open communication with the otherness. The second part focuses on the problem of community-based art, which is sponsored as public art, connecting the role of art with the representation of a local community and the art practices as agents of social cohesion. The third part elaborates on the topic of activism in art, which is separated from the horizontal oppositional guerrilla tactics of the 70s, producing a range of practices based on ambiguous assumptions of socio-political activism that express the convergence of critique and social practice.

Participation in art

One of the fundamental components of public art today is the concept of participation, which describes a process carried out by the artist in collaboration with others, mainly non-artists, who are involved with the art project. Participation recommends several practices, precursors of other concepts, and terms such as involvement, interaction, or inter-subjectivity that converge with the broader issues of the arrangement, reception, and distribution of art practices within a reformative transformation of the field of art itself into a democratic practice that relativizes human action,

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11 *ibid*., 782.

12 Jes Fernie, *Two Minds: Artists and Architects in Collaboration* (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2006), 15.

13 Maroš Krivý, "Don't Plan! The Use of the Notion of 'Culture' in Transforming Obsolete Industrial Space," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37, no. 5, (2013):1724–1746.

producing an interpretative framework of social significations. The author Tom Finkelpearl framed these practices with the term social corporation, defining art participation as a spiritual practice of human collaboration.[14] While Finkelpearl stresses that the social space and the interactive moment produce participatory art rather than any physical element, Claire Bishop defines participation as a practice "in which people constitute the central artistic medium and material."[15] In other words, participation in arts implies engaging with the public, structured in a particular space and a timeframe to facilitate human interaction.

Participation in art is built on collective communication either in the public space or in the exhibition venue, structuring a process of producing connotations of art and the social sphere. Participatory art does away with the traditional concept of art as form and representation. The artwork is the remnants of the collaborative work of artists-participants. This means that art does not produce works but projects, transforming the art field into an "issue-based art process" that is built on the gathering of artist-public. Art is transformed into a discipline that relativizes human action, producing an interpretive framework of social signification determined by the moral values of altruism and solidarity, indicated as representative values of art engagement with society. In this regard, participation in art is considered an active agent of highlighting and perhaps recovering the sufferings of contemporary social realities. Participation includes, among others, communal and collective responsibility, as Bishop affirmed.[16]

Generally, art participation signifies the reconstitution of the art field to a field of social supply. From the 90s, art cooperatives and individual artists directed to the "offering" as a means of participatory art. For example, they offered buses to transfer visitors from Stockholm to a small town (Jorgen Svenson, Bus 993, 1993), distributed free small mirrors to protesters in the anti-capitalist movement against G8 (@rtmark, The Archimedes Project, Genova, 2001), or created a hydroponic garden as an alternative healthcare treatment for HIV/AIDS (Haha collective, Flood, Chicago, 1992). The catalog is broad in the book "What We Want Is Free: Critical Exchanges in Recent Art" which examines the use of the notion of gift by the artists, considering as a kind of distribution of goods and services as a medium for artistic production.[17]

However, "the gift" falls within the practice of charity and almsgiving and may not necessarily indicate an act of altruism. In the classic treatise on the gift, the French anthropologist Marcel Mauss established at

14 Tom Finkelpearl, *What we made - Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* (Dahram & London: Duke University Press, 2013).

15 Chantal Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory art and the politics of spectatorship* (London: Verso Books, 2012), 2.

16 *Ibid*., 12.

17 Ted Purves, Shane Aslan Selzer, *What We Want Is Free: Critical Exchanges in Recent Art* (New York: Sunny Press, 2014).

the beginning of the twentieth century a theory of the complexity of gift exchange18 in which donation is responsible for building an economy that strengthened the ethnocentrism of Western societies during the colonial period, leading Georges Bataille to point out that the construction of the theory of donation, which is posited as a prerequisite for any possible economy, embodies the Hegelian dichotomy of master and slave within the act of gift exchange.[19] From this point of view, participation as a kind of charity proposes morality as the responsibility of art to othering, deleting the sociopolitical significance of the public sphere that is replaced with the ethical sphere.

On the other hand, participation allows to art the folding of interventions, not only ephemerally or intangible but permanently in the physical space, where social relations are formed. Such as the Victoria Square Project in Athens, created by Rick Lowe in 2017, in the frame of the exhibition "Learning in Athens" organized by the Institution of Documenta. Despite declaring itself a social sculpture,[20] in reality is about a space – a former shop – that has developed into a significant cultural center in the Victoria district. The space functions as an active intervention in the urban fabric, having been constructed as a stage of social gatherings in a marginalized area with a strong immigrant presence, which frames actions such as art shows, workshops, music events, or kids' games. According to the official page of Documenta 14, Rick Lowe first came to Athens from Houston in 2015 via a philanthropic conference, while for the creation of its "Victoria Square Project," collaborated with diverse Athenian individuals and initiatives, including Afghan Migrants and Refugees.[21] In this context, the collaboration between the artist and the public is made from a top-down base, in which the artist, as project manager, separates himself from his collaborators. As an art project, the work addresses a public which crosses the city to participate in the events and thus functions as an observer of the environment of Athenian otherness. In other words, despite the good intentions, participation in art does not negate the divide that separates the art world from others. In their work on the anthropological turn of art, Arnd Schneider and Christopher Wright pointed out that artists reveals "the cultural distancing as well as appropriation or partial assimilation of another's culture through a romantic perception of others' indigenous cultures."[22] In sum, participatory art does not undermine the

18 Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. by Ian Gunnison (London: Cohen & West Ltd, 1966).

19 Michelle H. Richman, *Reading Georges Bataille: Beyond the Gift* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982).

20 The terminology social sculpture was introduced in the 1970s by Joseph Beuys, who proposed sculpture as a process (prozess) of a set of art practices that sculpt, reveal, and mobilize social criticism through dialogue, which is an integral part of social sculpture. See:Volker Harlan, *What Is Art? Conversations with Joseph Beuys* (London: Clairview Books, 2004).

21 Documenta 14/Artists: Rick Lowe. https://www.documenta14.de/en/artists/13512/rick-lowe.

22 Arnd Schneider, Christopher Wright, *Contemporary Art and Anthropology* (Oxford, New York: Berg, 2006), 192.

dominant bourgeois ideology connected with the art domain since the collaborative work does not invalidate the hierarchal distinction between the creator, who produces the artwork, the public that consumes it, and the uncanny others.

In conclusion, participation in art is associated with the emergence of the terminology of socially engaged art, which is directly linked to a democratic version of art. Obsession regarding the role of participation in the various shades of democracy by the art discourse recommends participatory art as a critical element of the cultural infrastructure of society and an agent that strengthens civic cohesion. In this regard, art practices are entwined with the manifestations of participatory democracy,[23] establishing a distinction between the narrow system of politics and the political dimensions of the social, which finds support from neoliberal governance, in which social participation signifies the move from the social democratic welfare state to participatory democracy. Participation thus acquires political importance as a concept that reformulates the citizen's obligation towards the society of participatory democracy. That means the responsibility shifts to citizens through the development of activities at the core of which participation in culture connects with self-development. And maybe participation in art is promoted culturally within the current neoliberal democracies but, in reality, celebrated as a social-democratic nostalgic desire. The same nostalgic desire has promoted community art as a form of public art.

Community art

Community art refers to works that mediate as agents of restoration, empowerment, and cultural development of a localized human group. Community art is a socially engaged art par excellence that has as a reference point the idea of participation. The importance of communitarian in art emerged in the 1990s under the redefinition of the very content of the field, which had been constituted of the urban movements in the 70s. The term community art, which in the 1970s framed the actions and practices of artists who participated in the campaigns for individual rights, housing, or medical coverage of the residents of the degraded neighborhoods and ghettos in London, was associated with neighborhood regeneration and the diffusion of cultural goods to disadvantaged communities, functioning as a countervailing factor of Public Art and its identification with urban landscaping beautification. Thus, community art has been identified with rundown neighborhoods, "demonstrating the potential of communities to define the nature and work that art produces as an integral part of the

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23 Carole Pateman, *Participation and Democratic Theory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970).

transformations within them."[24] As a result, the role of public art has expanded to issues of social policy that are directly or indirectly related to the impact of art on neighborhood economic revitalization issues.

In community art there are converged two models of urban politics, which determine the terminology in a category of public art. In the first model, art is considered an agent of social change in urban areas with economic, cultural, environmental, and educational deprivation. This is rooted in the British organization Free Form Art Trust, which, in the context of the general artists' mobilizations of the 1960s, turned to the deprived urban areas, inventing creative ways to upgrade the urban environment, calling its practices community art. Applications of the Free Form Art Trust were absorbed by the urban mechanisms in the 1990s and worked as factors in combating social exclusion in areas affected by post-industrial decline.[25] The second model was established in the United States through the Neighborhood Arts Program, which aimed to integrate members of ethnic communities into the normative conditions of participatory democracy. This politics was developed after the explosion of movements for civil rights, especially after the coordinated and unified Black Civil Rights movements in the South, which led to a wave of vandalism of public and private property. Arts for Neighborhoods programs focused on funding participatory projects, mainly workshops and street art festivals, as a strategy to address the cultural deficit that urban exclusion implies.[26]

However, the association of community art with public art in the frame of the politics of community reconstruction developed a series of critical debates among art scholars. The art historian Miwon Kwon suggested the patterns of community art proposed by the exhibition "Culture in Action" curated by Mary Jane Jacob in Chicago in 1993 that goes beyond ethical communitarianism. The "Culture in Action," was oriented to patterns of communities through the art grouping built on "public interaction and participation, the role of the artist as an active social force, and the art education programming as a core part of the artwork."[27] Thus the creation of an art working group, which disbands after the end of the work, the partnership between the artist and the locals in the production of the art project or the artists' support to an existing community organization, according to Kwon "address daily problems collectively, integrating the art project into the flow of the everyday life of the participants."[28]

On the other hand, Grand Kester, recognizing community art as socially

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24 Joanne Sharp et al., "Just art for a just city: public art and social inclusion in urban regeneration," *Urban Studies* 42, no. 5/6 (2005): 1009.

25 Kate Crehan, *Community Art: An Anthropological Perspective* (Oxford: Berg, 2011).

26 Owen Kelly, *Community, Art and the State: Storming the citadels* (London: Comedia Publishing Group, 1984).

27 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002), 100.

28 Id., 134.

engaged art, sees in its applications the moral dimensions of art.[29] Kester understands community art as an intervention within human groups that uses participatory practices for the improvement of their living conditions. For Kester, "these practices based on creating solidarity, counter-hegemony and escape of the isolation."[30] Interestingly, the examples used by Kester concern contemporary precarious labor communities such as seasonal Mexican workers in the US, border trade unionists, and marginalized groups of the industrial proletariat.[31] In this sense, the community is resurrected based on economic terms, while art attempts to materialize an anti-capitalist community of supply, according to Kester.

In sum, the approaches of art theory to the concept of community are contradictory. On the one hand it is protective, in the sense that art tries to preserve the minimum contacts and meanings, with which the community articulates its existence. On the other hand, the concept is extended beyond the predetermined status of its existence, through processes that establish art as a producer of the community itself. In other words, the notion of community art is not fixed. It is in a constantly dialectic redefinition that moves between institutionalism and anti-institutionalism as well as between the aesthetic and anti-aesthetic status. These contrasting perspectives converge on a common point: the entirely warm connotations regarding the idea of community. Art perceives the idea of community as a homogeneous and mono-cultural group of people living in a stable place, having particular characteristics in common. It is a nostalgic idea of a human organization where the proximity of human beings was based on ties and blood mixing, spatial proximity, and mental and spiritual closeness. In the contemporary era, such a conception of community does not exist. In contrast, it is shaping as an imaginary formation, mobilized from time to time in the service of ideological power by various forms of nationalism.

According to the historian Steven Conn, those who offered community as the alternative to contemporary impersonality must have in mind there are examples of where communities react defensively to outsiders, where they throw up barricades, literal and metaphorical. "It is this dual sense of gated community, a place welcoming to those inside it and hostile to those outside that makes the recent growth of communities oxymoronic and redundant at the same time."[32]

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29 Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2004), 9-10.

30 *ibid*., 100.

31 *ibid*., 163-191.

32 Steven Conn, *Americans against the City* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 6.

Art activism

The idea of art activism is linked to the activation of participatory art practices, which liberate society from the alienation and fragmentation that constitute the neoliberal economic system, thus defining artistic practice as differentiated from political forms of domination,[33] according to Kester. Activism in art is perceived as a democratic process intended to inspire art audiences to take action on identified sociopolitical issues. In this context, the art field is conceived as a self-organized collective, which develops coordinating infrastructures of dialogical connections between different subjectivities, which share an anti-capitalist ethos. Art activism prompts the re-evaluation of the correlations between the urban sphere and social behaviorism, exerting a decisive influence on the processes of public sphere production, including the shaping of new correlations between community, urbanism, regionalism, and globalization. Within these processes, which involve a multitude of cultural institutions, non-governmental organizations, artists, and art collectives, activated actions that move away from earlier situations of opposition and resistance, that is, from practices of deviant behavior in the public space, recognizing activism within the current societies of the active citizens. Generally, the fundamental transformation of the revolutionary project in art, especially as formulated by the Situationists in May 1968, has transformed the artist from an active social agent to a critical thinker of the broad social structures being built in the globalized neo-liberal world. Through the ongoing process of integrating concepts and tools, art today produces several assumptions of socio-political activism, which takes the role of an alternative to critical cultural strategies in the urban environment, pushing artists to renounce any form of opposition, "and to embrace the establishment, applying its rules even more firmly and scrupulously than the rest of society."[34]

Art activism, under cultural events such as Biennale and art festivals, creates new fields of convergence of art with the processes of socio-political culture production, activating practices through actions whose characteristics suggest energy and innovation that constitutes such a fundamental ingredient of the current politics of the creative city. One can claim that cities today are the stage of a wide range of art activist initiatives. Street art festivals, performances, parades, public walking, food sharing… These public events seem to balance the mechanisms of cultural production and legalized social behaviorism, benefiting urban policies. Setting up temporary places for entertainment, art activism offers ephemeral experiences while maintaining the necessary bohemian atmosphere for the city to be considered multicultural. From London to Berlin and Athens to Barcelona, art activism has become an essential component of the cultural life of

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33 Grant H. Kester, *The One and the Many: Contemporary Collaborative Art in a Global Context* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 205.

34 Gideon Boie & Matthias Pauwels /BAVO, *Cultural Activism Today. The Art of Over-Identification* (Rotterdam: Episode Publishers, 2007), 6.

cities. The art practices under the umbrella of activism are considered expressions of an alternative or an underground culture that show the progressive integration of the past grassroots art practices, such as street art, into urban strategies within the general neoliberal turn of the 21st century on the political and cultural level.

Art seems to oscillate between the global milieu and the broadening of neoliberal politics, articulating new myths of radical faith and revolutionary romance under the terms of sociopolitical engagement. According to the curator Nato Thomson, this spatial activist art is characterized "by aesthetic interventions, culture jamming, and a host of neo-situationist tactical media approaches at the bottom that create interventions in space."[35] In fact, under the umbrella of activism, art practices create innovative interventions that adopt a grassroots culture, which combines DIY ethics of the art revolutionary project offset by an urban spectacle, "creating a kind of lifestyle anarchism finding practical application in personal rebellions, giving meaning to individual disobedience against the established social normality."[36]

For sociologist Richard Day, activism in art opposes the normative value standards of neoliberal politics, using existing aesthetic means to produce practices that function as alternatives in the in-between space of institutions and everyday life. As Day argues, without moral engagements around requests for free assertion and equality, art activism involves actions that "enrich the organization of the art content without bringing about any broader forms of social emancipation."[37] In broader a sense, art is engaged with activism, a phenomenon of the present official micro-political scene which includes insurgents, extremists, and bombers in the same category,"[38] playing a fundamental role in the collective imaginary that leads to an ontology of cultural activism, which does not locate hegemony and resistance in the body of society but in the micro-environment of the art word.

In today's world, with its democratic deficit resulting from ever-increasing powers of surveillance and control, something we all experienced during the recent pandemic of Covid 19, art seems to encourage passive withdrawal. Within the current post-capital policies that push towards manifestations of dissent, which are cultivated through a revolted population

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35 Nato Thompson, *Seeing Power: Art and Activism in the 21st Century* (Brooklyn and London: Melville House, 2015), 22.

36 Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Life Style Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 1995), 19.

37 Richard J.F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London and Toronto: Pluto Press & Between the Lines, 2005), 26.

38 Rosi Braidotti, "In Spite of the Times: The Postsecular Turn in Feminism," *Theory Culture & Society* 25, no. 6 (2008): 11.

worldwide,[39] calling into question the authority and legitimacy of the state, art seems to have allied with the urban liberal treaty, having a crucial role in the sociocultural production processes. As an actor of social cohesion, art activism produces micro-systems of social interactions shaping of relational arenas of political resistance, representing a crucial symbolic system in the urban environment today. In sum, art activism constitutes the arsenal of socially engaged art, restructured into a creative intervention of a time-bound action within a public sphere oriented to cultural recreation, proposes new kinds of rebellion patterns through a collective meditation on the significance of the post-capitalist crisis, that transform the public space into a cosmopolitan nursery of representations of resistance.

Conclusions

The association of public art with social and political practices can be understood as a step of the urban turn to cultural policies involving actors from worlds other than that of culture, particularly the economic world. Public art stems from new urban strategies that tie the fate of cities to cultural planning and creative city strategies in which art is considered a vital agent of capitalist urban production. Of course, the institutionalization of Public Art (in capitals) in the 1980s in a new discipline between art and architecture transformed public artworks into regulators of the urban environment in a crucial period when art was included in the fundamental components of the sustainability of post-industrial cities. As a particular new art genre, public art refers to works of a different and often contradictory nature that democratize the art field while simultaneously acting as a driver of economic development and a factor in tourism appeal. Whether in the case of art-led development strategies or policies to support creative industries, public art has been one of the dominant instruments of city gentrification for almost forty years. Under the art institutional system, which produces and distributes art globally, suggesting particular handling of creative practice-oriented, public art operates deliberate tactics, constructing an one-dimensional and homogenous global cultural sphere in the cities. Although globalization has replaced the traditional universalism of art, the theoretical frames of public art are structured by Western dialectic, meaning the cultural hegemony of the West still prevails globally. The present so-called art world, which could be identified as the alliance of the Western art institutions and academies, omits or conceals "the transnational articulations (both historical and contemporary) deployed by affirmative, resistant artistic initiatives, many of which have emerged and are emerging from the Global South."[40]

39 For example, the international populist socio-political movement Occupy Movement that expressed opposition to social and economic inequality and the lack of real democracy had spread in 951 cities in 82 countries, according to Wikipedia.

40 Carlos Garrido Castellano, *Art Activism for an anticolonial Future*, 1.

In conclusion, if we want to define the current public art, we can say that it has consolidated its orientation towards a definitive break with its history as an aesthetic entity in the cities and as an essential supplementary element of the architectural space, shifting its point of reference to the temporality of events through the immediate diffusion of practices in the public space, producing an autonomous, self-sustaining cultural model that emphasizes the heterogeneity of art production, which is distributed to the public through the cultural institutions.

In this framework, the social and political practices indicate the desire of cultural institutions to capitalize on the urban space, transforming the public space into an experimental laboratory, a field of criticism, and a platform for the production of spectacle. As a result, the shaping of an increasingly developing trend towards cultural events with the vehicle of art practices that work in the logic of art-run placemaking.

As the artist and writer Gregory Sholette points out, the claustrophobic, tautological, narcissistic art world is the protagonist in all the current successive and accelerating situations of shadow economic policy, in the ever-accelerating shift of capital from crisis to crisis. Under this regime, the art sphere is now manifest as blatant, with the autonomy and exceptionality of art appearing illusory as it suggests all the hallmarks of the inequalities that characterize our contemporary age.[41]

41 Gregory Sholette, *Delirium and Resistance. Activist Art and the Crisis of Capitalism* (London: Pluto Press, 2017), 31.

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MAIN SECTION

Graffiti, Street Art and Public Space Regulation

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ABSTRACT
With this work I intend to reflect on the ambivalence that contemporary cities experience in relation to the practices of graffiti and street art: if, on the one hand, we see more works being validated and even promoted by the regulatory agents of urban space, in a strategy of valuing creativity as an intangible asset, there is at the same time a set of strategies to eliminate or prevent the emergence of graffiti or unauthorized street art. This ambivalence stems from the ability these practices have to create new images of the city and new discourses about the public space. I will start from the urban communication studies framework, move towards the discussion that arises from laws and rules that regulate the production of graffiti and street art and then observe the legal framing around these practices in Lisbon and Bologna.

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KEYWORDS
Graffiti; Street art; Urban space; Legislation; Regulation

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Lefebvre's theory on the right to the city can be used to look at graffiti as a practice that creates social space in the sense that it recovers the use value of the city through the appropriation of public space. Andrzej Zieleniec[1] calls it creative colonization and rescue of urban space, which evokes the possibilities that Lefebvre considers to be the essence of full citizenship and experience. According to the author, this perspective allows us to read graffiti as a gesture of active and creative involvement in urban space and, therefore, as a creator of urban space, in the sense that it underlines the possibility of creating a city for people, for people's lives and not only for the commercial logic of selling and consuming goods, services and experiences. Graffiti can be seen as a creative and political practice, as it manifests against the homogenization and standardization of urban space operated by the global affirmation of the dynamics of production, circulation and consumption of goods. However, it tends to be depicted as a symbol of decadence, disorder, insecurity, noise, and deviance from the hegemonic established order of the urban public space. Joe Austin[2] establishes a 1972 Times article as the starting point of this construction where words like 'problem' and 'epidemic' are used to characterize the phenomena and the costs of removing it begin to be pointed out during a particularly critical period of economic crisis. Graffiti writing has since been treated by media and public management organizations everywhere as a hazard, a symbol of public disorder and a form of disrespect for private property.

This paper seeks to participate in the discussion that arises from laws and rules that regulate the production of graffiti and street art, the observation of how the legal framing around these practices can reflect and replicate a set of ideological constructs, and how these practices participate in the creation of urban space by continuously negotiating space and challenging the dominant speeches allowed in the city.

The theoretical framework for this paper is based on critical readings of urban sociology, from Lefebvre to Don Mitchell's right to the city, in dialogue with socio-legal studies and scholarship on graffiti and street art in general.

The cities I observed are the two case studies I elected for my PhD research: Lisbon and Bologna. They were considered relevant for their notorious graffiti and street art scene in the European context and have legal specificities that constitute interesting examples for the current approach. I follow a case study methodology divided in two units of analysis: self-authorized or illegal graffiti and street art in the urban space; commissioned or authorized graffiti and street art in the urban space. This perspective assumes the existence of street art in galleries

1 Andrzej Zieleniec. "The Right to Write the City: Lefebvre and Graffiti," in *Environment Urbain/ Urban Environment*, Volume 10 (2016).

2 Joe Austin. *Taking the train: How graffiti art became an urban crisis in New York City*. (Columbia University Press, 2001).

and museums but will not focus on that specific context. To dive into each of these I use a set of data: specific scholarship on the case studies, news published in newspapers, local and national legislation created to regulate these practices, administrative offenses statistics and interviews with city management officials, artists, writers and curators or cultural programmers.

I will detail some of the findings on both cities to illustrate how graffiti and street art can participate in the creation of public space, together with the legal framing that regulates or seeks to regulate them, making evident how locality and legality are crucial aspects for the study of this phenomena.

I. Law making and The Right to the City

Don Mitchell[3] uses Henri Lefebvre's work[4] to reflect on public space in contemporary cities. Mitchell starts from the idea that the city itself is public, in the sense that it allows different people to meet, thus welcoming heterogeneity.

But he also states that this possibility implies taking some risk, some unpredictability, even the possibility of violence. There is a potential for disorder in the city that generates fear and that, for numerous reasons, has contributed to an increasingly accentuated environment of control and surveillance in today's cities. The existence of a public space as a socially produced space, in these circumstances, implies a permanent struggle for presence, visibility and representativeness on the part of groups that tend to be excluded by this tendency towards securitization and ordering of urban space. The right to the city is, like all rights, a way of organizing and contesting power. Mitchell states that all rights are social relations; they are forms of negotiation that can be institutionalized and become universal and rigid.

Rights are institutionalized through their formalization in laws, texts that establish rules for the lives of citizens, applied by institutions of power. Laws tend to oppress and dominate difference, because they generalize and conceptualize reality to the point of eliminating differences and thus hardly guarantee social justice. The formalization of rights in laws constitutes a moment in the creation of public space and not only at the symbolic level, but even at the material level. Complying with universalizing laws and norms, the space will reflect this trend towards homogenization and the annulment of what is different. Therefore, the fight for rights, following this dialogue that takes place in the city, is also a creator of public space and is a means to conquer the right to the city.

3 Don Mitchell. *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*. (New York: The Guilford Press, 2003).

4 See Henri Lefebvre. *The Production of Space*. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1991). And Henri Lefebvre. *O Direito à Cidade*. (Lisboa: Letra Livre, 2012).

The right to the city is the right to visibility in the public space, the right to physical, material, spatial representation. The right of bodies to have presence and voices to be heard. This right conflicts with private property rights that restrict access and use of certain spaces. The idea of a public sphere as the one developed by Habermas is mostly based on a male, white, proprietary universe which does not welcome the innovation and advance that are necessary for building public space.[5]

The laws created to regulate the urban space only accept order discourses, but in order to fight and conquer a given right it is often necessary to resort to some violence. In fact, excluding violence from the public space is just excluding some groups that the social consensus tends to consider as threatening the established order, thus handing over the monopoly on violence to the state which can, through institutions such as the police or the courts, act aggressively against citizens: "As a legal entity, a political theory, and a material space, public space is produced through a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, order and disorder, rationality and irrationality, violence and peaceful dissent."[6]

While doing a genealogy of graffiti and similar practices, Marcello Faletra[7] takes us back to the founding of the modern city and Foucault's ideas on governmentality and control to justify this ideological construction around discomfort, disorder, danger, and fear that permeate urban management since the dawn of graffiti around the 1960's in America. Faletra finds the origins of a certain idea of order to be the basis of the legal and institutional sphere of the social system we have today and from which all rules, norms, and conventions arise, even the ones that we use to aesthetically evaluate these objects.

II. Public and Private: Space, Property, Art

One of the most common arguments in the regulation of self-authorized graffiti or street art practices is the protection of property, whether it is considered public or private.

We also see this in the analysis of the legal texts that constitute the formal basis for the regulation of these practices, as well as the discourse of many of the agents that participate in this universe, especially when it comes to institutional agents. It is therefore necessary to reflect on these concepts, which are also subject to discussion, and how they contribute to building the dynamics of use and appropriation of certain objects in the urban space in its various dimensions.

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5 Jürgen Habermas. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society*. (Germany: Polity Press, 2015).

6 Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, 51.

7 Marcello Faletra. *Graffiti: Poetiche della rivolta*. (Milano: Postmedia Books, 2015).

Alison Young[8] discusses how space, place and even property are constructions that led us into accepting the growing privatization of public space, increasingly excluding discussion and debate from the setting of rules that regulate its use and behavior.

> The very idea of 'public space,' then, persists in spite of the erosion of public ownership and its replacement with an extensive network of private proprietors whose ownership includes powers to exclude certain individuals from their property and a degree of authority over the permitted conduct of those who are allowed entry within their property boundaries.[9]

Franz von Benda-Beckmann, Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Melanie Wiber[10] clarify some of the most common ideas in theorizing about property, rights and property regimes, and propose an analytical framework to evaluate current property concepts in their extensive complexity. The authors propose that property "concerns the organization and legitimation of rights and obligations with respect to goods that are regarded as valuable"[11] and distinguish three elements that make up this organization: social units, that is, individuals, groups, corporations, states, etc. who may hold property rights and obligations; the construction of valuables as property objects; sets of rights and obligations in relation to those objects. These all operate in a certain space and time.

From this analytical perspective, property is not a specific right like ownership, but a comprehensive concept that includes different ways of organizing, regulating and managing property in different historical and social contexts.

Property relations are also part of the universe of social relations, they are not absolute nor can they be seen from a single perspective. They constitute a complex set of relations that determine and are determined depending on the context and are an important factor in the political configuration of society, as well as playing an important role in the constitution of the identity of individuals or groups.

We cannot analyze the texts of the laws created to regulate these practices without taking into account the very ideological nature of the discourse that constructs them. Like urban space or property arrangements, legal discourses are socially produced and reflect the context of their elaboration. Concepts used in legal norms do not exist absolutely outside of them, but are socially constructed, as is the case of property, the rights and duties of a certain group of the population or, in this specific case, what is considered damage or vandalism, publicity, and art.

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8 Alison Young. *Street art, public city: Law, crime and the urban imagination*. (Routledge, 2013).

9 Ibid., 128.

10 Franz von Benda-Beckmann, Keebet von Benda-Beckmann and Melanie Wiber (eds.). *Changing properties of property*. (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006).

11 Ibid., 2.

Research areas such as legal sociology or the branch of linguistics dedicated to discourse analysis question the descriptive character of legal texts and analyze them in conjunction with the context in which they are created and used.

When we analyze the texts of the laws that regulate the urban visual space, it is important to take into account that these texts are already the reflection of ideological constructions and not just the formalization of objective concepts or translators of a static, isolated reality, capable of being described and interpreted equally at all times.

In the case of graffiti and street art, for example, one of the concepts most commonly found in critical discourses on unauthorized practices is the idea of vandalism. This concept is used in news, in institutional texts, and was used quite continuously in the process of drafting the anti-graffiti law in Portugal[12], despite not appearing in the final text.

Just as it is problematic to reduce graffiti or street art to mere acts of vandalism, the definition of vandalism itself proves to be a challenge. There is a tendency to associate vandalism with any behavior that results in the alteration or destruction of a particular public or private asset or surface, covering a wide range of behaviors with different motivations. Gabriel Moser[13] proposes a definition of vandalism that, despite the diversity of motivations, contexts or relationships with space, takes into account the various points of view of an act of vandalism, namely the damage caused, the actors and the observers: "Vandalism is a voluntary degradation of the environment with no motivation of profit whatsoever, the results of which are considered as damage by the actor(s) as well as by the victim in relation to the norms that rule the situation."[14]

To arrive at this definition, Moser starts from a wide range of authors that he organizes into two theoretical approaches - one focused on actors and theoretically supported by psychology and sociology, and the other focused on objects targeted by damage, supported by environmental psychology. He also organizes the analysis perspectives of the phenomenon as centered on the damage caused, centered on the actors or centered on the context. Thirdly, the author resorts to a classification of aggressive behavior that he considers valid and transferable to vandalistic behavior. The definition proposed by Moser takes into account all these aspects and also uses a behavior classification scheme between intentional and negligent. According to this scheme, graffiti is considered a form of expression with communicative intentions, which puts it outside most

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12 The process of proposing, discussing, voting, approving and publishing this law happened in 2013 and is very well documented and publicly available online.

13 Gabriel Moser. "What Is Vandalism? Towards a Psycho-Social Definition and Its Implications." In von Benda-Beckmann, Franz, von Benda-Beckmann, Keebet and Wiber, Melanie. (coord.). *Vandalism: Research, Prevention and Social Policy*. (Portland: U.S. Department of Agriculture., 1992, 49–70).

14 Ibid., 54.

definitions of vandalism and, above all, outside any definition based on the idea of destruction.

From this study on the concept of vandalism, it is also clear that the laws that regulate a certain place or behavior coexist with a set of social norms - which Moser refers to as "social consensus" - and that are constructed in conjunction with the context that produces and applies them. From its application different reactions and behaviors may also emerge, so we can say that both laws or norms and creators of graffiti and street art co-create visual urban space by playing a certain role in this permanent dialogue between forces.

Assuming that vandalism, in the case of graffiti, is then a form of destruction with expressive, communicative intentions and not based on the pure violence of destroying objects, it becomes more pertinent to analyze these practices as communicative gestures and their approach in the context of the city as a communication space. Graffiti and street art can be carried out legally, through a set of authorizations from owners or authorities or outside this framework, without authorizations. When taken as a whole, these practices expose, underline, make visible the regulatory role of the State in controlling public space, the limits of public use of that space, the distribution of territory, access and visibility, revealing inequalities and spatial injustice, to mention just a few.

So, we have seen that, apart from the questions that may arise from the definitions of certain behaviors or practices, as well as from the writing of texts that establish the rules that seek to regulate or punish them, there is still a difference between the text and its real application by the delegated forces. On his study about norms for public space regulation, Lucas Pizzolatto Konzen speaks about this discrepancy between legal norms and legal practices, because legal norms do not always reflect the social norms nor the abovementioned social consensus.[15]

Public space, especially urban public space, should be heterogeneous, diverse, and allow participation, and legal norms should reflect this diversity. However, laws are mostly designed for national enforcement, and while some of them are meant for local enforcement, they usually regulate extensive and complex territories such as large cities composed of very diverse areas and neighborhoods with diverse communities, activities, and even geographical specificities.

What Pizzolatto Konzen ultimately underlines is how insufficient and unfair can blind, flat norms be and how they are unable to reflect the behaviors or practices which they were meant to address in the first place and even produce more spatial injustice: "Norms perform an important role in the production of space and can be understood in relation to other

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15 Lucas Pizzolatto Konzen. *Norms and Space. Understanding Public Space Regulation in the Tourist City*. (PhD Dissertation - https://portal.research.lu.se/en/publications/norms-and-space-understanding-public-space-regulation-in-the-tour, 2013).

social processes that take place in structuring the urbanization of cities."[16]

The laws tend to reinforce and formalize this idea that there are people, behaviors or gestures/images that are appropriate and others that are not. Who decides what is and is not appropriate for the law to be written: a set of people, alleged experts in public policy, legislation, etc. whose power was granted by popular mandate through democratic election processes. This can leave behind all the debate around public space, public sphere and true democratic participation when it comes to creating urban space by and for the people.

III. Case studies: how Lisbon and Bologna manage graffiti and street art

Lisbon

1. Legislation

The legal texts that regulate visual space in Lisbon can be divided in two groups: the ones that establish penalties for unauthorized, illegal, considered damaging behavior, and the ones establishing rules and financial contribution for communication in public space.

The laws and norms that can be used to apply penalties are both nationwide. The first is Article 212 of the Penal Code, updated in 1995, and penalizes all damages caused to property or animal belonging to others. The second is the so-called anti-graffiti law, from 2013, that "establishes the regime applicable to graffiti, postings, pecking and other forms of alteration, even if temporary, of the original characteristics of exterior surfaces of buildings, pavements, walkways, walls and other infrastructure."[17]

The laws that regulate publicity and other communication or expression in public space are local or of local enforcement: Law 97/88 of August 17, regulates the posting and registration of publicity and advertising messages and is applied by the municipalities. In the case of Lisbon, the municipal regulation dates from 1990, was updated in 1992, and 1995. The text of the regulation derives from Law 97/88 and adds details regarding permitted or prohibited supports and materials, licensing and inspection procedures.

There are also two local laws: Order No. 92/P/2015 of August 13 that regulates "Occupation of public roads with screens and advertising banners on buildings and scaffolding;" and Regulation for Occupancy of Public Roads with Construction Sites (ROVPEO), published in Municipal

16 Ibid., 28.

17 Translated from Portuguese.

Bulletin No. 1079, of October 23, 2014.

Inspection and law enforcement is carried out by the security forces that have jurisdiction in the city, namely the national police force – Polícia de Segurança Pública - and the local police force – Polícia Municipal. The penalties and fines charged, as well as the licensing fees are paid to the City Council.

2. Visual Space management

In Lisbon, the creation of graffiti and street art is addressed in two ways: there is a set of laws that regulate what you can and cannot do, both in public space and private property, and then there is occasional promotion of artistic, cultural, communal activities developed around these practices. This difference is discursively reflected around the dichotomy 'graffiti vs street (or urban) art,' where the first is usually the one associated with illegal, unauthorized, unsanctioned interventions, taken as vandalism, and the second with aesthetically valuable interventions, commissioned and even highly paid.

This contrast is evident in most of the news published in local and national newspapers, where the arts and culture sections usually present big murals, street art festivals, exhibitions or interviews with renowned street artists, whereas the local and/or management sections mostly mention the expenditures incurred by the city council or public transports networks in the cleaning of graffiti writing, mostly referred to as vandalism. Joe Austin analyses with detail the early origins of this approach by the media and how NYT contributed to create a negative image of graffiti since the first tags in New York City. The press, in print or online, still plays a role in reinforcing the idea that tags and graffiti writing are mostly acts of vandalism with no other intent than destroying public or private property that demand a huge amount of funding to be dealt with.

The management of these practices in Lisbon is centralized under the responsibility of the City Council, mainly in two structures: the Urban Art Gallery (Galeria de Arte Urbana, henceforth referred to as GAU), under the Culture and Heritage branch, created in 2008 specifically to manage graffiti and street art in the city,[18] in charge of the programming, authorization and production of every intervention; and the Urban Hygiene who coordinates all the removal of self-authorized interventions, executed by outsourced companies.

Public management appears to be based on this idea that there is good and bad graffiti or street art, based mostly on the placement and bureaucratic processes involved: if it is created on a private property

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18 About the creation of this structure and the local management of graffiti and street art please see Ana Gariso. *O potencial transformador da street art e o caso das Galerias Gap e Gau*, (Master Dissertation, available at http://hdl.handle.net/10437/9191, 2017).

without the sanctioning authorization of both the owner and the City Council, it's usually not recognized or addressed as art and it's mostly referred to as vandalism. GAU has, in its own web page, under the Mission title, a clear distinction between practices:

> The Galeria de Arte Urbana of the Departamento de Património Cultural (Department of Cultural Heritage), from Câmara Municipal de Lisboa (Lisbon's City Council) has as it's main mission the promotion of graffiti and Street Art in Lisbon, in an official and authorized scope and in a pathway of respect for the patrimonial and landscaped values, in opposition with the illegal acts of vandalism that harm the City.[19]

This seemingly rigid line dividing "good street art" from "vandalism" is breached when the workers who paint over or remove interventions in the city find something they think may be of artistic value. Then, they contact the GAU and ask for their advice on whether to keep it. If the GAU considers it of interest, it is preserved. None of these procedures is formalized, and they happen on a case-by-case basis:

> There are spaces where, although not legal, we realize that that artistic intervention is a strong artistic intervention that has the capacity to last. And this, when we are called into the spotlight, we try to preserve it, to keep it. It's not worth erasing, if it's in good conditions, if it's a good piece of work, it's better to keep it.[20]

> When the walls are in public space and when it is seen or verified that we are not talking about a situation of pure vandalism, there is quality in what we are printing, from our side there is also the sensitivity of asking GAU if they actually consider that these should remain in the public space. (…) Sometimes the pieces have such great importance from an artistic point of view and they are a much more enriching means than just to remove and transform the place in a voiceless white wall that ends up being much more appealing to more vandalistic acts.[21]

Nonetheless these criteria still seem to reflect the 'broken window' theory[22] which posits that when a neighborhood allows physical manifestations of disorder, like broken windows and graffiti, to go unrepaired, it will then begin to experience social disorder, higher crime rates, and decreased safety, a theory that has long been questioned by many scholars from different fields of study.

When it comes to policing and law enforcement, however, Lisbon seems like a very friendly environment for graffiti writers and street artists who come from everywhere to paint in the city. Most places are not heavily

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19 GAU website, http://gau.cm-lisboa.pt/en/gau.html (last accessed April 08, 2024).

20 Interview with Hugo Cardoso, Director of GAU of the Lisbon City Council, 2022.

21 Interview with Célia Costa, Manager of Urban Hygiene of the Lisbon City Council, 2022.

22 Developed by James Q. Wilson and George Kelling, in 1982.

FIG. 1 Jardim Cerca da Graça, self-authorized interventions, Lisboa, 2022. Photo: Ana Gariso.

FIG. 2 Jardim Cerca da Graça, self-authorized interventions after Urban Hygiene, Lisboa, 2022. Photo: Ana Gariso.

surveilled, there are a lot of narrow alleys without car traffic where, especially during night-time, one can easily paint without a permission. There are also four sets of walls,[23] called 'free painting walls' that can be used without previous sanctioning. These walls are mostly located in suburban or peri-urban areas of Lisbon, far from the cultural, economic and symbolic center of the city. Nonetheless, interviewed artists still complain about the lack of Halls of fame in the city. If someone wants to ask permission to make an intervention legally, they have to apply for it with the GAU. However, the requirements are so many and so detailed that only big murals or big art projects would probably pass through all the evaluation phases.

23 The City Council has stated that there was a plan for the creation of 24 free walls – one on each parish – until 2022. However, at the time of the writing of this paper, they are only four.

FIG. 3 Free painting walls at Street Art Park Lumiar, Lisboa, 2024. Photo: Ana Gariso.

Most of the initiatives and cultural programming developed around graffiti and street art are developed by GAU and sometimes Underdogs Gallery[24], a platform who plays an important role in curating walls in the city. GAU organizes Muro Festival[25] and promotes interventions in public housing neighborhoods managed by a municipal enterprise. In 2022, GAU assumes 48% of the interventions are in this type of context[26].

The gallery promotes the painting of murals regularly, inviting artists both national and international, promoting a so-called street art friendly environment in the city, supported by this idea around creativity that became a major factor when developing city branding strategies to attract investors, tourists, digital nomads and other projects and individuals considered relevant for the city's economic growth. With a few exceptions, these works are usually big scale, colorful, monumental murals, with little to no political content, made to please the taste of the most possible people, executed in a few days without public discussions involved in the process.

The cleaning waves have been more frequent in central areas of Lisbon, mostly during international big events and in touristic areas and this grows in parallel with the increase in initiatives like festivals, exhibitions and murals commissioning, in a movement like the one Rafael Schacter[27] criticizes when he points out that the greatest danger resides in the fact that, while in its genesis street art made inequalities visible and claimed

24 About Underdogs Gallery please see Ana Gariso. *O potencial transformador da street art e o caso das Galerias Gap e Gau*.

25 The Festival was promoted in 2016, 2017, 2018, 2021 and 2023 in different areas of Lisbon. More information can be found at: https://www.festivalmuro.pt (last accessed April 08, 2024).

26 Information stated by the director of GAU in an article published in Observador online newspaper available at: https://observador.pt/opiniao/valorizados-com-arte-urbana/ (last accessed April 08, 2024).

27 Rafael Schacter. "The ugly truth: Street Art, Graffiti and the Creative City," *Art & the Public Sphere*, 3:2, (2014): 161–176.

space for all those who inhabit the city, now it does precisely the opposite by hiding behind a mantle of color and beauty the inequalities and injustices of the urban space. This is what the author calls the ugly truth of street art, hidden behind the beautiful lie that homogenizes the space that wants to be different.

Bologna

1. Legislation

In Bologna there is a national law from the Penal Code, Article 639 that punishes all the Defacing and soiling of things belonging to others. This more generic law was written in the 1930's and recently, in 2009, it was altered with aggravation of the sanctions applied to the disfiguration or degradation of urban surfaces and prohibition of the sale of acrylic aerosol paint to minors, under 18 years old (punished with a sanction up to 1000 euros).

The cleaning, erasing, repainting of walls happens under particular circumstances: because it is also considered unauthorized intervention on private property, the city council has to notify the property owners in advance and can intervene only after their agreement or after a given period of absence of reply. There is also a set of popular organizations in the neighborhoods where the inhabitants themselves get together to clean, erase or paint over illegal interventions.

2. Copyrights

In Italy there is also a theoretical debate about copyrights and how they conflict with the penalizing law and the erasing actions, because the Constitution states that "art and science are free and free is their teaching" and the Italian law on copyright (law 633 of 1941) states that: "Intellectual works of a creative nature belonging to literature, music, figurative arts, architecture, theater and cinematography, whatever they may be, whatever its mode or form of expression may be, are protected by this law." The jurisprudence of the Italian courts is oriented towards the principle of protection of so-called "illegal works of art" from the point of view of copyright because in the legal text of reference, the application of the law is not expressly excluded in such cases, however, the main individual rights cannot derive from a situation of illegality, in particular with regard to rights of a patrimonial nature, such as those of economic utility. This also raises questions about the commercial use of illegal works, the valorization of certain artists on art markets and the commodification of graffiti and street art.

FIG. 4 "Portici" in Bologna, Via Zamboni, 2023. Photo: Ana Gariso

FIG. 4 "Portici" in Bologna, Via dell'Indipendenza, 2023. Photo: Ana Gariso

3. Visual Space management

Most of Bologna's buildings have archways, called portici, and this particular structure was recently classified as world heritage by UNESCO[28] making them a very specific object of public management. Firstly, because they are this liminal space in the city that cannot be considered interior nor exterior. It is an extension of each building, almost like a ground floor balcony, with polished paving, arched ceilings sometimes decorated with paintings and almost always with lamps or chandeliers.

These are the sidewalks of Bologna. The streets are for cars, bikes and other means of transport. So almost all the self-authorized writing and street art is created on these liminal areas of the city and the city council also has some limits to its intervention there. Secondly, because being

28 In July 28, 2021.

classified as UNESCO's heritage makes them object of a new set of symbolic values that can be used for branding the city and its surface as original, unique, authentic and precious, giving the illegal interventions, by contrast, an even more negative character.

Far from the city center, the city inside the old walls perimeter, there are a few places where one can see graffiti writing be made legally or not

FIG. 6 Via del Chiù Wall of fame, Bologna, 2023. Photo: Ana Gariso.

being penalized. Some walls became informally free and are managed according to the set of rules that graffiti writers have for their work and they end up being the actual managers of these places.

Being a small city with a very cosmopolitan life, with a big number of young people spread throughout the city in all the university buildings, Bologna shows a lot of creativity on its walls and it seems like the cleaning actions are not as frequent as the ones observed in Lisbon.

However, there seems to be a transformation in progress due to the UNESCO classifying and also to a global tendency for gentrification of old city centers. Some artists and cultural organizations state that the City Council is painting the walls more frequently and that there are fewer funding opportunities to small initiatives that do not go through the Councils approval, in a movement of growing centralization.

The City Council is currently (2023) creating a commission involving academics, law makers, public managers, art curators and the public to establish a set of guidelines for the future of public art programming and public space management.

The structures involved in managing graffiti and street art in Bologna seem less centered in the City Council, with some civil society organizations taking part in the processes, whether its art and community initiatives or neighbors associations to clean non-authorized writing. This constitutes a big difference when we think about the Portuguese case, where there is

an evident lack of tradition in civil society participation and a heavy role of the state.

Walking around the city center is possible to find a lot of walls that are covered in drawings, poems, paste ups and other interventions from what looks like a long period of time, even in areas with a heavy touristic flow, like the area around Piazza Maggiore or the two towers.

Bologna also has a strong tradition in wall writing and a historical relation with graffiti and street art culture. In 1984, an exhibition called "Arte di Frontiera" (Frontier Art) takes place at the Modern Art Gallery, curated by Francesca Alinovi, featuring works by the protagonists of the Old School of New York graffiti such as Kenny Scharf, Keith Haring and Jean-Michel Basquiat. In 2012 a project, called Frontier evokes this first official promotion of graffiti culture. Frontier involved arts curators and academics and is a demonstration of how there seems to be a wide dialogue in the city, when it comes to promote these practices.

The city is also known for having a strong tradition in all kinds of wall writing, thoughts, poetry, political phrases, drawings and all kinds of self-authorized interventions. In an interview, Francesco Volta, responsible for the Urban Regeneration and Public Art Department at the Culture and Creativity unit of the City Council, underlines the particular social, cultural and historical set of reasons to explain the existence of so much of these interventions in Bologna, adds that there is a big contrast between how old the city is and how young its population, and that despite being small, Bologna has metropolitan dynamics, also due to the ubiquitous presence of the University infrastructures that are spread around the whole area of the city, particularly the old city.

Final Notes

In conclusion, we can see how in Lisbon initiatives seem concentrated in state institutions, with little civil society projects. The cut is usually between legal and illegal, making it particularly difficult to fight the perception of any self-authorized intervention - particularly the hard to read graffiti writing - as valuable and communicative. Despite the not very strict control, vigilance and repression, and despite there is a lot of people painting, graffiti writers complain about the lack of opportunities and the lack of visibility and lettering is not valued. There is also no talk about copyrighting and deletion - paint covering paint, mostly – is ubiquitous and frequent. Bologna seems to have more civil society initiatives – both to create and to delete – and, despite the smaller size of the urban territory, there is a much bigger number of free walls to paint. Whether they are officially authorized or just collectively accepted. On the other hand, the fact that most of the urban area is now classified by UNESCO will definitely change the levels of tolerance regarding self-authorized interventions.

The institutions that manage urban space have the tendency to eliminate all conflict, dissent, and violence as enemies of democracy, when they are essential to its maintenance. As Rosalyn Deutsche[29] states, public art must create the public sphere to fulfill a truly public function, and for that it must be truly inclusive. Programmers and curators cannot claim that the works are representative, accessible or inclusive if they are programmed with a homogeneous audience in mind, selected from the exclusion mechanisms of the institutions themselves.

So we can see a very clear difference both in the ideological and consequent legal framing, and in the cultural promoting of these practices, where graffiti writing or small spontaneous street art interventions are taken as dirt, noise, symbols of disorder, danger and socially disapproved behaviors, wheatear murals and other big art projects are promoted as urban decoration and intangible creative assets to promote the city as a place for marker trades and capital accumulation.

However, not just the main set of style and materials, also this creative aura emanates from the irreverent nature of graffiti in the first place. Alison Young also points to the difference between ownership and function when we speak of public space, and how graffiti writers and street artists operate according to the second when they gather, move around and paint, thus surpassing the value we tend to attribute to property and opening urban space to the creative imagination. Through use, writers and street artists gestures change the function of urban space creating new meanings and possibilities.

The question that arises from this research is how cities, in a context of commodification and competition among themselves, can maintain levels of civic participation in public art projects, promoting true citizenship and the right to the city.

29 Rosalyn Deutsche. *Evictions: art and spatial politics*. (Cambridge: Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, 1996).

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MAIN SECTION

How It's Made: Behind the scenes of Public Art production at Public Art Agency Sweden

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ABSTRACT
The paper aims at investigating what working structures and methodologies lie behind the implementation of artistic practices in urban spaces, through the case study of Public Art Agency Sweden, the leading institution dealing with public art projects in Sweden. Production processes of art in public space may often seem unclear and contorted, thus discouraging its inclusion in urban development and design projects. This problem is also stoked by a relative scarcity of scholarship regarding procedures and methods to develop public art projects: the present contribution constitutes a first attempt to start filling this gap, outlining both the bright and dark sides of Public Art Agency Sweden's model. This research has been carried out by the author during a six-months internship at the aforementioned governmental agency, where she did documental and bibliographic research in the agency's library and archive, interviewed staff members, participated in the agency's activities, and personally took part in the development of two artistic projects.

KEYWORDS
Public Art; Creative Practices; Urban Space; Methodology; Cultural Policies

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The paper aims at investigating what working structures and methodologies lie behind the implementation of artistic practices in urban spaces, through the case study of Public Art Agency Sweden, the leading institution dealing with public art projects in Sweden. Production processes of art in public space may often seem unclear and contorted, thus discouraging its inclusion in urban development and design projects. This problem is also stoked by a relative scarcity of scholarship regarding procedures and methods to develop public art projects: in fact, while several key texts have been published over the last thirty years, trying to define the new role taken on by public art in society,[1] the idea of site-specificity[2] and new alternative approaches towards public art[3] for instance, focusing on what stands behind these interventions is still not very common. The present contribution constitutes a first attempt to start filling this gap.

This research is part of the author's PhD dissertation, developed at University of Ferrara's International Doctorate in Architecture and Urban Planning. Research has been carried out by the author during a six-months internship at the aforementioned governmental agency, where she did documental and bibliographic research in the agency's library and archive, interviewed staff members, participated in the agency's activities, and personally took part in the development of two artistic projects. This fieldwork experience allowed the author to have an insight into the agency's working methodologies and structures, which were seen first-hand while working on projects. Public Art Agency Sweden was chosen as a case study for several reasons, among which its interest in developing new methodologies and formats and in expanding the idea of what art in public space can be.

Since the first half of the twentieth century, art has increasingly been at the center of policies fostering its spread into urban space, as demonstrated by the worldwide diffusion of public art programs during those years.[4] This situation further developed during the 1980s, when art and creativity were put at the center of culture-led urban regeneration processes, also promoted thanks to the success of Richard Florida's creative city idea.[5] In Sweden, the question of allocating state funds for art was raised already at the turn of the 20th century, resulting in the Parliament adopting the One Percent rule as a model for financing public art in 1937. At the same time, Public Art Agency Sweden was established, with the mission of providing artists with work opportunities, of collecting artworks to be placed in state-run workplaces and of creating inspiring examples of public art in

1 Suzanne Lacy (ed.), *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).

2 Miwon Kwon, *One Place after Another. Site-specific Art and Locational Identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).

3 Claire Doherty (ed.), *Out of Time, Out of Place*. Public Art (Now) (London: Art Books, 2015).

4 Silvia Mazzucotelli Salice, *Arte pubblica. Artisti e spazio urbano in Italia e Stati Uniti* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2016).

5 Serena Vicari Haddock and Frank Moulaert (eds.), *Rigenerare la città. Pratiche di innovazione sociale nelle città europee* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2009).

connection with state-commissioned building projects.[6] In 1997, Sweden introduced its first architecture policy, *Framtidsformer*, which became the starting point for implementing new approaches in working with architecture and public art. In the same year, the agency was commissioned by the government to work with an extended mission, which involved collaborating with non-governmental actors, such as municipalities, county councils and private developers: this became the occasion for the agency to test one of its first urban development projects (Mats Theselius, Håkan Johnsson, *Trafikplats Mölndalsbro*, 1998-2003), in collaboration with the municipality of Mölndal and the Swedish Transport Administration.[7] In 2010 the extended mission was completed and the agency received a new assignment - *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* - which consisted in collaborating with the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish National Heritage Board and ArkDes to develop and strengthen a holistic approach to the planning and construction of public environments. The assignment's objective was to spread good examples of how site-specific artistic design can contribute positively to an overall planning of public places and buildings. The mission resulted in thirteen collaborative projects located all over Sweden, which involved municipalities, private property owners and consulting companies, as well as professional groups such as architects, artists, engineers, planners and designers.[8] The projects regarded environments such as travel centers, schools, residential areas, parks and hospitals. All projects took the location as their starting point and, through cooperation between different actors, they aimed at achieving designs that interacted with the history, use and meaning of places. Moreover, some of the projects were developed in dialogue with citizens, thus including new perspectives on public living environments.[9] In making these projects, though, the agency's role was still pretty marginal, providing organizational support through its consultants, while the responsibility for the projects relied mostly on municipalities, property companies and county councils.

One step further was made in 2016, with the *Konst Händer - Art is Happening* assignment, which was part of a wider governmental investment in art and culture in certain neighborhoods called *Äga Rum*. This assignment caused controversy as it was formulated in a problematic way, stating that the artistic projects should increase democratic participation and primarily target low-voting turnout areas, thus creating fertile conditions for power asymmetries and tricky stigmatizations.[10] The

6 Public Art Agency Sweden, *Public Art Agency Sweden website* (Swedish version), https://statenskonstrad.se/ (last accessed June 22, 2023).

7 Ibid.

8 Ibid.

9 Henrik Orrje et al. (eds.), *Konsten att gestalt offentliga miljöer. Samverkan i tanke och handling* (Värnamo: Elanders Fälth & Hässler, 2013).

10 Jonna Bornemark, "Maktens väggar och möjligheten att skapa det som ännu inte finns", in *Perspektiv på Konst Händer*, ed. Lena From (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd, 2021): 12-31.

agency decided to interpret the assignment developing projects in the so called "Million Program" housing neighborhoods, Sweden's late modernist dwelling areas built between 1965 and 1974, where it aimed at producing examples of what forms public art can take in that specific urban context, at creating new meeting places through artistic production and at developing new methods for citizens' participation and agency in the processes leading to the creation of public artworks.[11] These areas were chosen also from an urban history perspective, as no new art had been added there for fifty years and the urban fabric needed to be revisited.[12] This was really a turning point for the agency, as the project introduced the opportunity to work on contexts which were already both spatially and socially defined, without any building-related commission and in close dialogue with the civic society. Fifteen projects to implement were chosen all around Sweden, which were managed by Public Art Agency for three years, also thanks to the development of new methods and formats.[13]

Among the latest achievements of the agency has been the inclusion of public art in Sweden's new unified policy for designed living environments (*Gestaltad livsmiljö*), adopted in 2018 and based on a holistic approach taking into consideration not only physical spaces, but also social aspects. This policy involves four state institutions: the Swedish National Board of Housing, Building and Planning, the Swedish National Heritage Board, ArkDes and Public Art Agency Sweden. In particular, the agency received three commissions within *Gestaltad livsmiljö*, among which one dealt with providing methodological support for public commissioners in using the Percent for Art (*Hur bild- eller formkonstnärlig gestaltning kan integreras när staten bygger*). The objective was to find methods and models for collaboration and financing of visual arts in public environments: one of the results has been an increased interest from state property owners in bringing art early in planning and building processes.[14] This was achieved both by establishing routines for collaboration and agreements regarding art with four of the main state property owners (Akademiska Hus, Swedish Fortifications Agency, Jernhusen, National Property Board) and by producing a practical handbook for government commissioners, describing working processes to make and maintain public artworks (*Offentlig konst – handbok för statliga beställare*).[15]

This brief review of the agency's main assignments allows an understanding of its position in Sweden's public art scene and of the institution's

11 Rebecka Katz Thor and Joanna Zawieja (eds.), *Art is Happening. Civic society as an initiator. Artistic productions of socially engaged art by Public Art Agency Sweden* (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd).

12 Interview Joanna Zawieja, 31/03/2023.

13 Henna Harri, "En känsla av tillhörighet – att arbeta som curatoriellt team", in *Perspektiv på Konst Händer*, ed. Lena From (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd, 2021), 126-139.

14 Public Art Agency Sweden's website.

15 Public Art Agency Sweden (ed.), *Slutrapportering av regeringsuppdrag om hur bild- eller formkonstnärlig gestaltning kan integreras när staten bygg*er (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd, 2021).

interweaving relationships with city planning agencies. The author would like to conclude this overview by clarifying what are the public art projects' typologies the agency is currently working with. In fact, as mentioned before, besides collecting public artworks to be located in governmental buildings, the agency has carried out several site-specific public art projects. At first, these projects were aimed at the production of mostly building-related permanent artworks, thus adhering to a more traditional – though site-specific – idea of public art. An example of this category are the three art projects Alba Baeza and Peter Hagdahl are curating for University of Gothenburg's new Natrium building, as part of the art program *The Intimacy of Strangers* (2020-ongoing): in this context, for instance, artist Hanna Ljungh's *Curiosity Cabinets: Medicinareberget* proposal consists of a free-standing monumental salt stone cabinet and of five smaller cabinets with minerals that will be integrated into the walls of the building.[16]

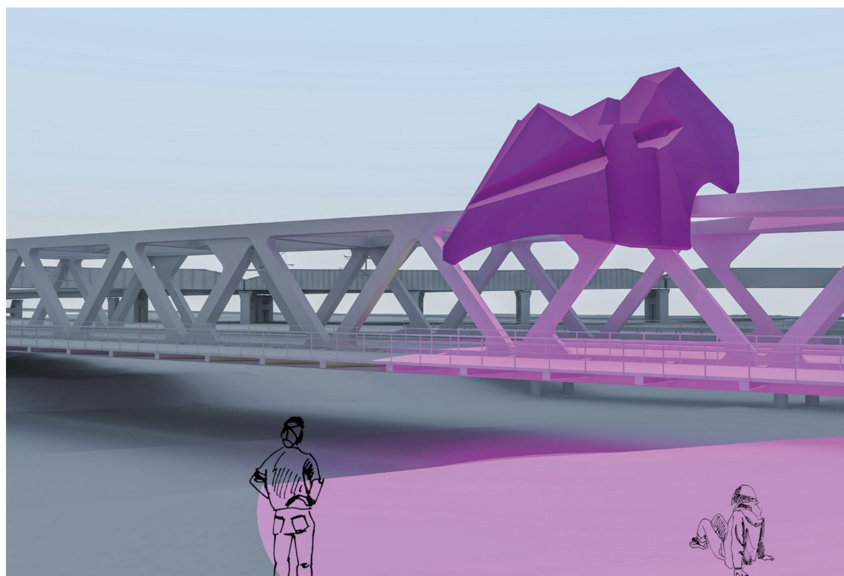

FIG. 1 Katharina Grosse, proposal for bLINK. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Today, these projects continue to be part of the agency's work, but they have been flanked by new formats, trying to stretch the borders of a by-now outdated idea of public art. In fact, many projects are no longer related to governmental buildings, but to wider public spaces and infrastructures such as squares, parks, nature reserves, whole neighborhoods and railway lines (urban development projects). For this reason, some of these projects are not relying on Percent for Art commissions, but on a dedicated public budget. They can deal both with local micro-scale and with national macro-scale. As for the micro-scale, the projects within the *Konst Händer* assignment (2016-2018), curated by a team consisting of Inger Höjer Aspemyr, Lena From, Peter Hagdahl, Marti Manen and Joanna Zawieja,

16 Public Art Agency Sweden's website.

can be taken as examples: for instance, Map13 Barcelona's *Paviljong* in Hageby resulted in the creation of a wooden pavilion in the neighborhood for people to meet, in collaboration with a group of newly arrived architects and engineers.[17] As for the macro-scale instead, an important project that is currently being carried out is *Västlänken: Kronotopia* (2014-ongoing), curated by Lotta Mossum with the support of Alba Baeza and Ann Magnusson: in collaboration with the Swedish Transport Administration, the agency is working on a colossal infrastructure development project involving four sites, three train stations in Gothenburg (Haga, Centralen, Korsvägen) and a grade separation in Olskroken.[18] As for the site in Olskroken, for instance, artist Katharina Grosse designed *bLINK*, a massive pink sculpture to be installed on a new railway bridge and allowing maintenance staff to access it and work on it through an internal system of stairs, heating, lighting, drainage and railings[19].

FIG. 2 Urbonas Studio, *The Swamp Observatory*. Photographer: Nomeda & Gediminas Urbonas. Source: Public Art Agency Sweden.

Moreover, both for building-related and non-building-related projects, artistic outcomes can be either permanent, temporary or take hybrid forms. As for temporary projects, an example is *Out of the Sky, into the Earth* (May-September 2022), curated by Edi Muka and Helena Selder: in collaboration with the Baltic Art Center, the agency produced two temporary artworks in Visby, *The Swamp Observatory* by Urbonas Studio – an AR app that visitors can use to observe and imagine new species or habitats in Visborg's ponds – and *Brakfesten/La Grande Bouffe* by Anne Duk Hee

17 Katz Thor and Zawieja (eds.), *Art is Happening*.

18 Public Art Agency Sweden (ed.), *Kronotopia. Övergripande konstprogram för Västlänken och Olskroken planskildhet* (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd, 2016).

19 Anna Lindholm and Lena From (eds.), *Offentlig konst. Handbok för statliga beställare* (Stockholm: Statens Konstråd, 2021).

Jordan and Pauline Doutreluingne – including a sculpture made of elm tree branches, creating a banquet for insects, birds and other organisms, and a film.[20] As for hybrid formats, this means that projects can either start with temporary interventions and take a permanent form afterwards or the opposite, that a permanent commission can be flanked with temporary artworks, or that artworks can take up semi-permanent forms. For example, the temporary interventions *Walk, hands, eyes (Gamlegården)* and *What can we know in such darkness?* by artist Myriam Lefkowitz in Kristianstad (2016) were the starting points for the permanent artworks *Förhandlingen (The Negotiation)* and *Marmorlinjen (The Marble Line)* by Anna Högberg and Johan Tirén in the same site[21]. Another example is the *Liquid Interfaces: Open/Closed Gateways* project Lotta Mossum is curating for the University of Gothenburg (2023-ongoing), whose aim is to develop a semi-permanent project with a focus on digital art, that is an artwork which has a longer life than temporary projects – usually lasting only few days or months – and needs thus to be able to evolve and change over time.[22]

Having outlined Public Art Agency Sweden's history and projects' typologies, the second part of this contribution will take a look behind the scenes, illustrating the agency's working structure and methodologies, in order to explain how artistic practices in public spaces can be implemented. As for this, interviews with staff members – including curators Alba Baeza, Edi Muka, Joanna Zawieja, Lotta Mossum and Peter Hagdahl, head of the Art Unit Lena From, director Patrick Amsellem and former director Magdalena Malm – have been crucial, providing precious insights into the agency's functioning. Up to ten years ago, the Agency was described by Magdalena Malm as a very bureaucratic, administrative institution, where most of the staff didn't have artistic competences and where there was no artistic vision, a problem that sometimes negatively affected the quality of its artistic production.[23] When Malm was appointed director in 2012, she thus decided to carry out a radical re-structuring of the organization, based on a strong idea: art must be the core of the institution, making the agency one of the first and few examples of this working model in the public sector in Europe. Malm explains:

> Imagine a Kunsthalle that was part of the administration and didn't have an artistic leader: that would be behind the development of contemporary art. […] The reason why public art has become so much behind contemporary art in general - I mean, now we're catching up slowly - is because it's not been artistically-led, because it was part of the administration.[24]

20 Public Art Agency Sweden's website.

21 Katz Thor and Zawieja (eds.), *Art is Happening*.

22 Public Art Agency Sweden, *Liquid Interfaces: Open/Closed Gateways art program.*

23 Interview Magdalena Malm, 04/05/2023.

24 Ibid.

At the time, the agency used to hire external project managers to develop artistic projects, with the outcome of, on the one hand, being unable to produce projects and contents internally and thus commissioning everything outside the organization, on the other hand of not building knowledge from past projects, as external project managers where constantly shifting.[25] For this reason, Malm decided to permanently hire a team of full-time curators with artistic competences, which became the heart of the agency. This choice was very important for several reasons: first, it allowed a process of learning and building competence to work with art in public spaces, also thanks to the different backgrounds and perspectives of the curators who were selected (Edi Muka and Lisa Rosendahl were specialized in temporary projects and biennials, Joanna Zawieja was an architect, Lotta Mossum and Peter Hagdahl used to deal with permanent art projects).[26] Secondly, having full-time curators made it easier to relate to and engage stakeholders, especially in long projects lasting several years[27]. Lastly, the curatorial unit started to do strategic work, which would have been impossible for external curators, as clarifies Peter Hagdahl:

> In projects, if you're a consultant or if you're an employee, it is pretty much the same, because it's about producing a public artwork. The difference is what we do in the Art Unit: we talk quite much about the future and how we should work with strategies for the coming years, what kind of fields we should jump into and what kind of typical projects we should develop. As an employee, you're pretty much part of that strategy work, so that's the main difference.[28]

Besides introducing the curatorial team, Malm decided to make decision-making processes within the agency more transparent by appointing a head responsible for each of the Agency's departments (art projects; mediation & communication; supervision, collection & administration).[29]

One of the most important changes introduced by Malm was reshaping the role of project managers into that of curators, which was perfectly adherent to her idea of art as heart of the agency: it's key to clarify that this was not just a terminological shift, but an attempt to confer new and increased value to highly-specialized professional skills, which have had a hard time being credited during the last decades. Malm explains:

> There wasn't this awareness of the curatorial position then, they didn't even call people curators. They were project managers or project leaders. So that was also a very important mark for me to say "this is an artistic profession, it's not someone who just coordinates a project".

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25 Ibid.

26 Ibid.

27 Interview Lotta Mossum, 03/04/2023.

28 Interview Peter Hagdahl, 27/03/2023.

29 Interview Malm.

> If you are a good curator in public space, you create artistic value. It's an artistic profession, it's not about the technical coordination of a project.[30]

Curator Alba Baeza pinpoints sharply the difference between the two roles, besides the many common tasks:

> For me there is a nuance in between these two notions that is very critical, because of course a lot of our work is project management: you handle budgets, you handle administration, you do a lot of mediation between different parts, you write agreements, you do a lot of politics almost, implementing policies and so on. But the curatorial has a very significant added value which is the creative and critical reading of a context and of a certain situation. I think that's absolutely key for the quality of the resulting artworks.[31]

Moreover, despite several similarities with the work done by museum curators, all the interviewed curators were firmly convinced that curators working in public spaces need specific skills to carry out their projects and tried to outline the most relevant for themselves. Among the most mentioned, were socio-relational skills, such as the ability to mediate, translate and negotiate between artists, commissioners and audiences (Baeza, Muka, Zawieja, Mossum, Hagdahl), to build trust with other institutions and/or civic society (Baeza, Hagdahl), to facilitate and support artists (Baeza, Muka, Hagdahl, Malm), to be open-minded, listen and learn with humbleness (Zawieja, Mossum, Malm, Hagdahl), to know when to hold on with stubbornness and when to let go (Zawieja, Mossum), to be co-creative (Mossum, Zawieja), to be provocative and challenge artists (Hagdahl), to create space for art and to safeguard artistic perspectives (Mossum, Hagdahl), to do pedagogical work (Baeza, Zawieja, Malm, Hagdahl), to anchor art within its context (Muka), to be transparent (Zawieja), and to act with responsibility (Malm). Another set of competences regards more creative aspects, such as being able to create connectedness between artistic practices and specific contexts (Baeza, Muka, Zawieja, Mossum), critically interpreting contexts (Baeza, Zawieja), finding common threads and building narratives on projects (Zawieja, Mossum, Malm), being able of embracing context's complexities (Mossum), keeping openness in projects to foster integration of artworks and context (Mossum), working against social contexts' mainstream (Mossum), and doing problem-solving (Malm). Finally, the interviewees have framed a set of socio-spatial competences, such as being able to understand the needs of the context and its specificity (Baeza, Zawieja), working with a site-specific process-based approach (Zawieja), being able of understanding city planning processes, the role of different public institutions in society and of grasping the urban/architectural scale (Zawieja), and adapting to different

30 Ibid.

31 Interview Alba Baeza, 03/04/2023.

contexts (Mossum, Malm, Hagdahl).

Moreover, internal discussion and collaboration in the Art Unit have been fostered: while beforehand every project manager used to work on his/her own project, a more organic way of working started to be implemented, as clarifies Lena From:

> I think the way we brought the discussion into this Unit - our way of working more journalistically in a way - has brought on a quality to the Unit, so that everyone's aware of what everyone else is actually working with for the time being. So, you know that this group is a resource that you can use regardless of what project you want to bring to the table. And that wasn't quite the atmosphere before.[32]

This was taken to the next level when curators started working in teams, a method that was tested for the first time during *Konst Händer*: in fact, working with the civic society, curators had to work during weekends and evenings in order to allow citizens' participation. This led them to look for more sustainable ways of working, allowing members of the team to always have a backup in case they were ill or unavailable for any reason.[33] Lotta Mossum explains that she pushed for extending this way of working also to other projects, in particular *Västlänken: Kronotopia*, as during the first years she had a hard time to curate such a large and complex project by herself[34]. Baeza explains that now every project is managed by at least two curators, three in the case of more complex ones, and describes this as a triangular rotating structure:

> We meet once a week and we inform each other of what has been going on in our respective areas of responsibility. When we are out in the field, each of us takes different meetings and then we inform our colleagues. […] And then maybe once a year or every six months we reassess how this team structure is going. […] So, it's an ongoing discussion all the time about what works best. It's a very responsive methodology because we try to adjust and adapt to the necessities of each project more or less on a regular basis.[35]

Another crucial methodological shift has been the introduction of new project formats, together with changing the workflow for permanent projects in order to produce higher-quality artworks. In particular, Malm introduced temporary projects for the first time and integrated urban development projects permanently in the agency's working, after the conclusion of *Samverkan om gestaltning av offentliga miljöer* assignment. To do so, she hired new curators with specific expertise: Edi Muka and Lisa Rosendahl for temporary projects, and Joanna Zawieja for urban development ones.

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32 Interview Lena From, 25/04/2023.

33 Ibid.

34 Interview Mossum.

35 Interview Baeza.

For these kinds of projects, special budgets were introduced in order to be able to work without a commissioning institution. Moreover, essential was the importance of both *Konst Händer* assignment and *Västlänken: Kronotopia* project, as they required the agency to learn how to work both with civic society's small scale and with urban infrastructures' grand scale. Malm thought that this was a way to open up new perspectives on what art in public spaces could be, unlocking resources that were usually devoted to very traditional public artworks and creating new production opportunities for artistic ideas that were seldom funded at that time. Through publications, projects and events such as the *Creative Time Summit: Stockholm* (2014), perspectives on public art in Sweden started to change and artists who would have never applied for public artworks before started submitting proposals to the agency.[36] The introduction of temporary projects fostered experimental approaches and asked curators to reverse their usual way of working, as Edi Muka explains:

> In coming to the Public Art Agency, what was intriguing for me was that it was a new challenge. It was about getting involved in something that was not there, because the institution didn't work with temporary projects before. […] The permanent projects that we do are usually art in connection to buildings. […] The building gives the context, gives both limitations and possibilities, because the artwork has to be connected to the architectural drawing, to places that are assigned. Sometimes it's possible to negotiate, sometimes it's not, but the artistic process follows a structure, so to say, and then you try to find the freedom within that structure […]. In temporary projects it's the opposite. We try not to work within the structure. I mean, the structure exists there in terms of ideas, in terms of histories, in terms of context that one wants to investigate, but it has no foreclosed parameters when it comes to what is possible and what is not. So, the freedom for the artist is much bigger to really try and test and do whatever they have in mind. And that was also the idea why we started with the temporary projects: it was to try to provide this as-big-as-possible freedom for the artist to see what's possible to do and also to work with the question "what can art in public space be?".[37]

Muka also points out that *Konst Händer* represented a turning point to start merging working methodologies, to open up processes and create new hybrid formats. In fact, these projects were not fully adherent to temporary nor to permanent building-related formats and thus gave the opportunity to test new solutions, as aforementioned examples show. *Konst Händer* projects also promoted an increased flexibility in working processes, which led to the introduction of the so-called step-by-step methodology: this implied maintaining flexibility in setting goals

36 Interview Malm.

37 Interview Edi Muka, 29/03/2023.

Building-related Permanent Art Project's Workflow

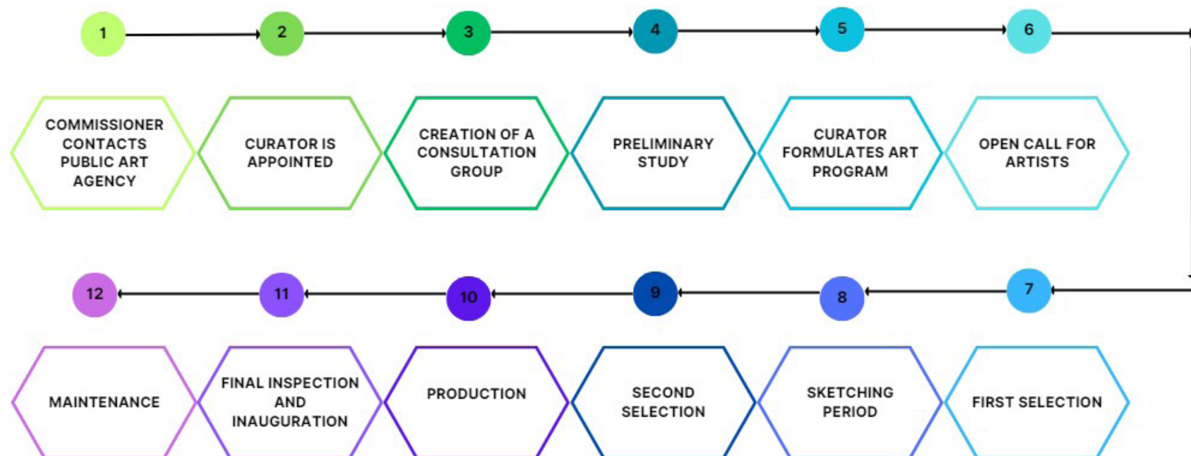

FIG. 3 Building related permanent art projects' workflow. Source: Irene Ruzzier

and visions so that the limits of what is possible are not set too firmly and too early, keeping open questions about art's format, theme, site and future management, and being able to constantly re-adjust the project's direction.[38] Figure 3 illustrates traditional building-related permanent art projects' workflow: this is not a fixed model and can vary even in the case of permanent art projects, but it has been deeply revolutionized by *Konst Händer*. The process usually starts with a commissioner – usually a property owner planning to erect a new public building – contacting the agency to ask for artistic work. Then, the preparation phase starts with a curator (or curatorial team) being appointed and a consultation group being gathered. The agency claims that curators should be included in the planning process as early as possible in order to obtain a better integration between art and architecture and that they are both needed because they add artistic perspectives to the building process, and they create space for art during the process, avoiding it to be caught in between the many urgent necessities of the planning procedure, and because they can balance the building process's need for rational efficiency with the artistic process's need for sensitivity, securing high-quality results. The consultation group includes representatives of the various stakeholders involved in the project, such as architects, property owners and future users. In case of complex projects, the consultation group can have an advisory

38 Public Art Agency Sweden's website.

role and delegate the project's practicalities to a working group. If a project comprehends more than one art intervention (each with its consulting group), a steering group is formed to make overall financial and strategic decisions. Then the curator carries out a preliminary study with the group, assessing the opportunities for artistic expression, considering different procurement forms, investigating future maintenance possibilities, and establishing a preliminary budget. The curator then formulates an art program, a support document containing purpose, socio-spatial context analysis, curatorial vision, timeline, budget, distribution of responsibilities among the actors involved, typology of procurement procedure, artistic formats and other special conditions.[39] After the program is discussed with the consultation group and approved, an open call for artists is published, after which they are valued both through a set of bureaucratic and financial criteria and a set of qualitative criteria, such as the relevance of the artistic expression in relation to the curatorial vision, feasibility and artistic quality. In the past, procurement procedures used to be simpler, as artists were often invited directly to produce artworks: nonetheless, for transparency reasons, during the last few years, open calls have become predominant. The head curator reads all the applications, while other curators in the Art Unit read a certain amount each: everyone makes a longlist, which is discussed during an internal meeting in order to come to a shortlist to present to the consultation group and to a meeting gathering all the agency's staff (production meeting). Usually, two or three artists are selected and invited to work on a sketch, for a period which lasts at least three months. One or more mid-sketch meetings can take place, where the artist can ask questions to the curator and consultation group. At the end of the sketching period, the sketches are presented both to the consultation group and at the production meeting, and one of the artists is selected to produce the final artwork. As a last step, the artwork is produced, inspected and inaugurated. The production process, in large projects especially, can be very complex and last for many years.[40]

In *Konst Händer* (Figure 4), as well as in temporary projects, there was no initial commission and no specific site. A multidisciplinary curatorial team was created, which started doing research about civic society's organizations to create partnerships and ways to interpret the government's assignment. Then a tour through Sweden was organized to present the project. After that, instead of writing an art program, an open call was published for the civic society to submit ideas about what citizens would like to change in their living environment. Among the 153 received proposals, 28 were researched by the team for six months and 15 were finally selected to be implemented. From that moment on, the curatorial team started working in dialogue with the civic society on site, with local project groups for example, to find effective ways to engage citizens in participatory

39 Public Art Agency Sweden's website.

40 Ibid.

Konst Händer Projects' Workflow

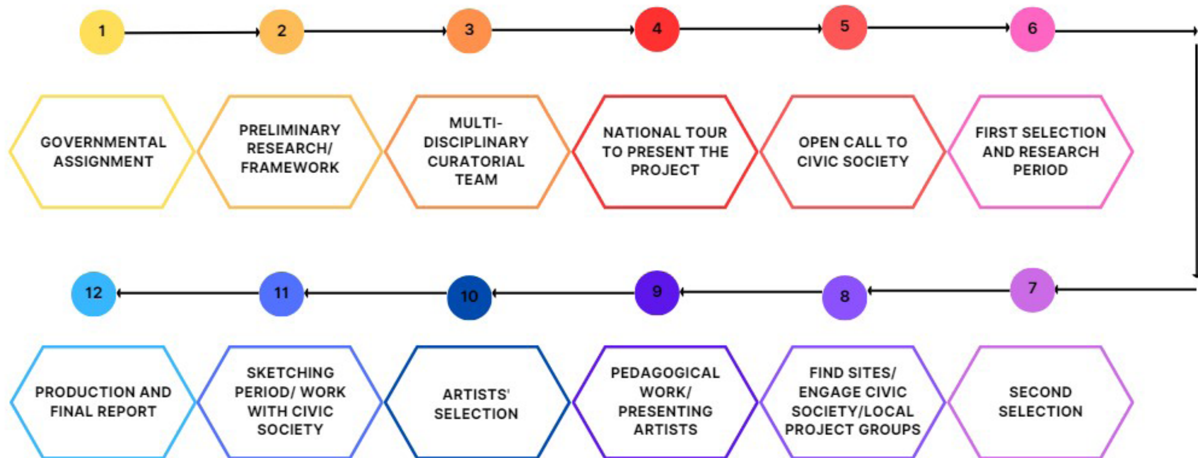

FIG. 3 *Konst Händer* projects' workflow. Source: Irene Ruzzier

projects (traditional meetings not being the best solution) and to find sites. The team developed pedagogical processes with the local project groups, and several artists were presented in relation to the chosen topics and sites. After that, artists were selected by the curatorial team in dialogue with local project groups. Then, the sketching period started, where artists worked together with civic society, the artistic engagement varying depending on the type of practice and context. Lastly, the artwork was produced and reported, with slightly different approaches to every site. Outcomes and formats varied very much, including both permanent installations and temporary artworks.[41]

Despite being criticized for not always being able to meet the hopes for participation from the involved dwelling areas and for introducing less stable working conditions for artists, Konst Händer has led to many positive results in terms of creating change though art and weaving relationships with the civic society, but most importantly it represented a turning point for the agency in opening up its working processes and experimenting new formats and methodologies, strengthening site-specific and collaborative aspects[42]. Moreover, From explains that these methods have continued to be reviewed and adjusted in next community-driven projects such as the ones in collaboration with Folkets Hus och Parker: in this case, the

41 Interview From and Zawieja.

42 Interview From.

process was improved by taking a longer time, having three-curators teams instead of two-ones and expanding the way for artists to work more freely with communities on site (without having to go through the process of applying and submitting reports or sketch proposals).[43]

In 2020, Patrick Amsellem was appointed as new director of the Public Art Agency, kept the new working model introduced by Malm, and decided to introduce further improvements, such as creating more synergy between different departments by co-creating projects and sharing information, and as pushing the staff to have a more holistic perspective. Moreover, Amsellem is interested in promoting projects dealing with a higher degree of publicness, favoring accessible public environments on governmental buildings, and co-financed projects. Lastly, one of his main goals is to make the agency open to a wider audience, lowering thresholds and making people more comfortable in approaching public art: for this reason, great efforts have been made in activating the agency's collection through social media, in communicating with an accessible style and in designing a public program that could attract non-specialized audiences.[44]

The analysis of Public Art Agency Sweden has allowed to pinpoint both this model's strength points and weaknesses, from a methodological and structural perspective. On the one hand, in fact, the presence of an institution dealing with public art on a state level brought about crucial achievements in the Swedish public art field, such as the opportunity to work on large-scale projects that could be hardly feasible for local actors, to stimulate public art's legitimization in the contemporary art's scene, to introduce new ideas about what public art can be, to act as a model for working methodologies to be spread all over the country, to build knowledge, to develop new working processes for public art, to support small municipalities lacking budgets and experience to work with public art, to empower small local partner institutions, to work with few high-quality projects and high-profile expertise thus setting standards, to have more financial stability than independent actors and to push for public art's inclusion in governmental policies and urban development processes. On the other hand, weaknesses include difficulties for a state institution to work with local contexts' specificities and to engage citizens, civic society's suspicion towards public institutions, dependency on political shifts and governmental assignments (which can be problematic in terms of content but especially of timing and funding), and a need to be transparent and responsible which doesn't always lead to top-quality artistic outcomes.

To conclude, Public Art Agency Sweden constitutes a complex and interesting example of how it is possible to work with art in public space: in fact, these processes can often look vague and unclear from the outside.

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43 Ibid.

44 Interview Patrick Amsellem, 22/03/2023.

The present contribution, through a detailed analysis of its working structures and methodologies, aimed at clarifying how art in the public space is produced by the Swedish leading public art institution, outlining both the bright and dark sides of this model. The case study investigation has given an insight into public art production procedures that have been unveiled by the author through months of fieldwork and original interviews, with the objective of making them more accessible internationally.

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MAIN SECTION

The Cultural District Between Planning and Spontaneity: The Agglomeration Dynamics in Manifattura delle Arti in Bologna

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ABSTRACT

Cultural clusters are renowned to bring many benefits in terms of agglomeration and therefore they are often employed as catalysts of urban regeneration. Policymakers attempted to recreate this phenomenon through top-down strategies. However, it has been observed that clusters often arise naturally without direct intervention from local governments or policy incentives. Therefore, the policy dilemma of whether it is possible to plan something that tends to emerge spontaneously arises. Drawing on urban and cultural policy issues, this article aims at investigating the agglomeration dynamics within the planned district Manifattura delle Arti in Bologna. Through 14 interviews with the key actors involved in the district, two main findings are unveiled: the presence of a spontaneous subcluster of bottom-up organizations within the planned district and the civil society as an engine of regeneration and inclusion.

KEYWORDS
cultural districts; cultural planning; spontaneity; agglomeration dynamics; urban regeneration; Bologna

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Introduction

The recognition of cultural industries as drivers of economic growth and urban revitalization has led policymakers to focus on using them in a variety of urban regeneration initiatives at different scales.[1] One type of such initiatives aims to create cultural districts through top-down strategies which mimic the phenomenon of economic clusters.[2]

Santagata theorized four models of cultural districts. The first, the Industrial Cultural District operates similarly to Marshallian districts, being self-organized without reliance on governing institutions. Then, the Institutional Cultural District relies on established institutions to protect property and brand rights. The other two categories are referred to as "Quasi-Cultural Districts". The "Museum Cultural District" centers around museum networks in historic art towns, requiring government intervention to balance productivity and tourism. Finally, the "Metropolitan Cultural District" is employed to regenerate economically declining areas, promoting artistic development to establish a new city identity.[3]

However, economic clusters, which are geographic concentrations of interconnected businesses, suppliers, and associated institutions in a particular field or industry, fostering innovation, productivity, and competitiveness within a region, have emerged mostly spontaneously, without government intervention or incentives, following the dynamics and benefits of agglomeration and knowledge spillover among professionals.[4]

This article aims to contribute to the discourse on cultural districts and provide insights for policymakers and urban planners engaging with cultural-led regeneration initiatives. Moreover, it delves into the dilemma of top-down and bottom-up strategies in cultural planning. Policymakers face challenges in finding the right approach to implement culture-led regeneration interventions, frequently focusing on desired outcomes without adequately considering how the policy process may affect them.[5] Although these policies have successfully generated positive results in various aspects, they have often neglected to recognize the potential negative consequences inherent in their own designs.[6] According to the literature, planning creativity appears contradictory, as its value lies in its

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1 David Bell and Kate Oakley. *Cultural policy*. (London: Routledge 2014).

2 Walter Santagata. "Cultural Districts." In *A Handbook of Cultural Economics*, ed R. Towse, 2nd (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing 2011).

3 Santagata "Cultural Districts, Property Rights and Sustainable Economic Growth". *International journal of urban and regional research*, 26(1) (2002), 9-23.

4 Alfred Marshall, " Principles of Economics" (Cambridge: C. W. Guillebaud 1890). Michael E. Porter, "Location, competition, and economic development: Local clusters in a global economy." *Economic development quarterly* 14.1 (2000): 15-34.

5 Christina Lidegaard, Massimiliano Nuccio, and Trine Bille, "Fostering and Planning Urban Regeneration: The Governance of Cultural Districts in Copenhagen." *European Planning Studies* 26.1 (2018): 1-19

6 Valeria Morea and Francesca Sabatini, "The Joint Contribution of Grassroots Artistic Practices to the Alternative and Vital City. The Case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)." *Cities* 135 (2023): 104234.

perceived novelty and potential for innovation. Contrasting this perspective, the case analyzed in the present study shows that the planned district incited the development of a subcluster of bottom-up organizations, therefore, stimulating spontaneity and innovation. Moreover, it highlights the pivotal civil role of grassroots organizations in the requalification of the neighborhood.

This research explores the mechanisms of agglomeration dynamics within one cultural district in Italy, focusing on how policymakers can foster and support spontaneous order and subcluster formation. After this introduction, this article will delve into a review of the main literature (Section 2), specifically focusing on two strands: districts and agglomeration of firms as beneficial for the firms themselves, and the use of districts to benefit regional growth, considering the consequences of these urban interventions/policies. Section 3 will describe the methodology and context of the case study Manifattura delle Arti (MdA), while the findings will be presented in Section 4. Finally, Section 5 will discuss the major implications for urban planners and cultural policies that can be drawn from our case study.

Literature Review

Local and urban development are typically conceived as a process that in many cases follows economic dynamics of capital accumulation and distribution. From an economic geography perspective, regions acquire an economic advantage by means of economic agglomerations, of which the Silicon Valley and the Hollywood are textbook examples.[7] Agglomeration brings the benefits of sharing, matching and learning[3] within and between firms, in a mix of competition and cooperation. Geographic proximity facilitates knowledge dissemination, promoting innovation and production improvement. This mechanism is based on economic convenience and, as such, is a typically spontaneous phenomenon. In urbanized contexts, it has been seen how the agglomeration process deals with innovation and creativity, more than with vertical specialization.[8] This explains why certain cities become "creative" in a broad sense, like *fin de siècle* Vienna, pre-war Berlin[9] or New York City in the 70s and 80s, where artists would converge and exchange ideas, contacts, and human resources within and across cultural industries.[10]

Santagata attributes to tacit knowledge the role of essential driver of such

7 Allen J. Scott "The other Hollywood: the organizational and geographic bases of television-program production." *Media, Culture & Society* 26.2 (2004): 183-205.

8 Mark Lorenzen, and Lars Frederiksen. "Why do cultural industries cluster? Localization, urbanization, products and projects." *Creative cities, cultural clusters and local economic development* (2008): 155-179.

9 Peter Geoffrey Hall, *Cities in civilization*. Vol. 21. (New York: Pantheon Books 1998).

10 Elizabeth Currid-Halkett, *The Warhol economy: How fashion, art, and music drive New York City-new edition*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

agglomeration, that he defines as "districts". Tacit knowledge refers to an information system that possesses characteristics like those of a local public good or commons.[11] In cultural districts, information and knowledge circulate unrestrictedly and are communicated through implicit channels.[12] Bathelt et al.[13] define the dynamic information and communication environment as a "buzz" that sparks from face-to-face interactions, the physical coexistence of individuals and businesses in the same industry and location. In addition, specific information, continuous updates, intended and unexpected learning processes occur during organized and serendipitous meetings. Actors within the cluster actively contribute to and benefit from the dissemination of information, exchange of rumors, and sharing of news simply by being present in that environment. These districts associate cultural products with specific places, enhancing their reputation and positively impacting the local economy.[14]

While historically this process did not originate from planning (e.g., New York as described by Zukin and Currid-Halkett), soon enough policymakers realized that the positive externalities could have been internalized in urban and cultural policies with the aim to gentrify specific neighborhoods. In this view, cultural districts can emerge from top-down planning or organic growth from the bottom up. Thus, while Hollywood emerged spontaneously and with a variety of joint causes[15] and Soho in the 70s was a progressive and lively area thanks to artists who relocated to vacant former industrial warehouses to live and produce[16], the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao[17] is a famous case of a top-down cultural district in which culture is used instrumentally to revive a post-industrial city. In this view, cultural districts can emerge from top-down planning or organic growth from the bottom up. This raises the question of whether successful cultural districts develop organically or if they necessitate intervention and support from public policies, both during their initial development phase and in the long term.

According to Florida, economic growth and urban development hinge on the agglomeration of brilliant individuals, whom he refers to as "Creative Class". Among these talented are scholars, scientists, engineers, writers,

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11 Mariangela Lavanga. "The Cultural District" in *A Handbook of Cultural Economics* ed. Ruth Towse, Trilce Navarrete Hernández, 3rd (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar Publishing 2020).

12 Walter Santagata. "Cultural Districts".

13 Bathelt, Harald, Anders Malmberg, and Peter Maskell. "Clusters and knowledge: local buzz, global pipelines and the process of knowledge creation." *Progress in human geography* 28.1 (2004): 31-56.

14 Harvey Molotch. "Place in product." *International Journal of urban and regional research* 26.4 (2002): 665-688.

15 Scott "The other Hollywood: the organizational and geographic bases of television-program production."

16 Sharon Zukin, "Gentrification: culture and capital in the urban core." *Annual review of sociology* 13.1 (1987): 129-147.

17 Witold Rybczynski, "The Bilbao Effect. Public competitions for architectural commissions don't necessarily produce the best buildings." The Atlantic (2002): np.

novelists, painters, performers, actors, designers, and architects.[18] Firms go after creative people, or in most cases are established by them. As a result, all types of creativity may develop and grow in an interconnected environment. These special milieux can be traced from ancient Athens to Silicon Valley today.[19]

The theory of Florida has been perceived in different ways. On the one hand, it positively impacted the decisions of policymakers since it focused on creative people as a key factor in cities' economic growth.[20] On the other hand, it has been employed as a popular justification for planned cultural districts and gentrification operations, even in cases in which the ultimate policy goals dealt more with profitability and cleaning than support to the artists and livability.[21]

Indeed, urban renewal and its implementation are intertwined in a complex debate that is closely related to the concept of gentrification. As stated by Klunzman: "Each story of regeneration begins with poetry and ends with real estate."[22] Various regeneration initiatives have favored urban growth at the expense of certain target populations, leading to gentrification, segregation, and exclusion[23]. According to Leslie and Catungal, Florida's concept of the "creative class" is interconnected with class inequalities in various aspects. It perpetuates and worsens class, gender and racial disparities.

After several years of intense debate, in his most recent book, "The New Urban Crisis", Florida recognizes that some of the most significant detrimental consequences, such as gentrification and inequality are caused by the very same element that spark lively cities, such as the creative class.[24]

However, Florida's creative class theory is still implemented by many governments as a key urban economic development policy.[25] Some scholars have noted that the concept of the creative class theory does not aim to cultivate talents broadly but rather serves as a policy blueprint catering to the privileged segment of society.[26] Florida's creative strategies are

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18 Richard Florida. *The rise of the creative class*. Vol. 9. (New York: Basic books, 2002).

19 Eric Weiner. *The geography of genius: A search for the world's most creative places from ancient Athens to Silicon Valley*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2016).

20 Eleonora Redaelli. *Connecting arts and place: Cultural policy and American cities*. (Cham: Springer, 2019).

21 Ann Markusen. "Urban development and the politics of a creative class: evidence from a study of artists." *Environment and planning A* 38.10 (2006): 1921-1940.

22 Klaus Klunzman. "Keynote speech to Intereg III Mid-term Conference, Lille." *Regeneration and Renewal* 19 (2004): 2.

23 Deborah Leslie and John Paul Catungal. "Social justice and the creative city: class, gender and racial inequalities." *Geography compass* 6.3 (2012): 111-122.

24 Florida, "The new urban crisis: How our cities are increasing inequality, deepening segregation, and failing the middle class-and what we can do about it".

25 Carl Grodach "Cultural economy planning in creative cities: Discourse and practice." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 37.5 (2013): 1747-1765.

26 Jamie Peck. "Struggling with the creative class." *International journal of urban and regional research* 29.4 (2005): 740-770.

perceived to prioritize the commercialization of arts and cultural assets rather than enhancing urban development through culture.

City and regional leaders use Florida's measures and indicators to shape their development strategies, leading to the inference that any city aspiring to become a creative hub will achieve that status by simply adopting identical strategies and policies.[22] But how can we talk about creativity within this "copy and paste" process? Peck suggests that Florida's "creativity strategies were in a sense pre-constituted for this fast policy market" (p.767). Indeed, these policies support groups of influential people who aim to bring the convenient ideas of creativity into reality, often without considering their local context. Despite claims of being authentic to local needs, such strategies often reinforce elitist forms of city governance and tend to repeat the same policies within tight budget constraints. In particular, creative clusters are one of the key elements of this process.[27] Following the discussion on planning creativity, the question arises about whether successful cultural districts develop organically or if they necessitate intervention and support from public policies, both during their initial development phase and in the long run. According to Mommaas, these projects are often initiated by urban planners who seek to regenerate urban neighborhoods or boost the local creative economy. Among the most famous examples are the Museum Quarter in Vienna, the Temple Bar in Dublin, and the textile district of Ticinese in Milan[28]. Cooke and Lazzaretti[29] suggest that the initial development of a cluster must occur organically, and while supportive conditions can be facilitated, they cannot be artificially created through top-down approaches of the potential role of arts and culture. Similarly, Stern and Seifert[30] maintain that clusters may be "cultivated [but] not planned", and investments in the development of a planned cultural district always face the possibility of failure. They distinguish planned cultural districts from "cultural clusters". While planned districts regard cultural venues and large audiences, cultural clusters are about the dynamic interactions within the contemporary art scene. Cultural clusters have the potential to revitalize urban economies by regenerating neighborhoods, stimulating civic engagement and social cohesion. At the same time, they may cause tensions and frictions, such as displacement and exclusion of the local community and gentrification of the area[31]. How can policymakers support and foster these clusters without stifling their unique characteristics and creativity? Scholars have

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27 Tommaso Cinti. "Cultural clusters and districts: the state of the art." *Creative cities, cultural clusters and local economic development* (2008): 70-92.

28 Hans Mommaas. "Cultural clusters and the post-industrial city: Towards the remapping of urban cultural policy." *Urban studies* 41.3 (2004): 507-532.

29 Cinti. "Cultural Clusters and Districts: The State of the Art."

30 Mark J. Stern, and Susan C. Seifert. "Cultural clusters: The implications of cultural assets agglomeration for neighborhood revitalization." *Journal of planning education and research* 29.3 (2010): 262-279.

31 Beatriz García. "Cultural policy and urban regeneration in Western European cities: lessons from experience, prospects for the future." *Local economy* 19.4 (2004): 312-326.

proposed different ways to navigate this delicate endeavours. Looking at cases in Berlin, Marseille, and Lausanne, Andres and Grésillon[32] distinguish between top-down or bottom-up urban interventions based on the different impact they have in the surrounding environment. They refer to the "branding cultural brownfield" as the approach designed to regenerate derelict spaces on the path of the industrial district type of gentrification, in which culture is integrated into the strategy of branding and promoting cities[33]. On the contrary, the "alternative cultural brownfield", is developed from bottom-up movements and, therefore, it appears to be the most impactful for the community. Leslie and Catungal[34] report the case of some organizations in Toronto which, as voluntary and non-profit activities, represent an example of alternative approaches to the capitalistic framework of the "creative city". These grassroots organizations are explicitly politicized and focus on addressing complex issues related to social marginalization. Similarly, Haghighat[35] argues that independent artist-run project spaces within neighborhoods serve as venues for discussion and the initiation of collaborative efforts. Kravagna[36] raised concerns about artists who involve themselves with marginalized communities under the guise of education. Finally, Lidegaard et al.[37] propose a governance matrix (Figure 1) in which they distinguish between top-down initiatives, driven by publicly dominated agencies, and bottom-up efforts led by private actors operating independently. Explicit strategies have defined objectives, while implicit ones embrace spontaneity and self-growth. They suggest that a blended approach should be advocated for, combining elements of both top-down and bottom-up strategies in cultural planning, to leverage the benefits of spontaneity and mitigate the potential setbacks of gentrification and inequalities.

Thus, a tension persists between acknowledging the benefits of co-locating artists and creatives for local development and the potential drawbacks when such phenomena are not spontaneous. This highlights the need for research to explore potential solutions. The next section will illustrate how this research aims to address this gap through a case study.

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32 Lauren Andres, and Boris Grésillon. "Cultural brownfields in European cities: a new mainstream object for cultural and urban policies." *International journal of cultural policy* 19.1 (2013): 40-62.

33 Franco Bianchini, "Cultural planning for urban sustainability, in *Culture and Cities. Cultural Processes and Urban Sustainability*, Louise Nyström & Colin Fudge. (Swedish Urban Environment Council 1999).

34 Leslie and Catungal, "Social Justice and the Creative City: Class, Gender and Racial Inequalities".

35 Leila Haghighat, "Hegemonic struggles in the city: Artist-run spaces and community art in the anti-gentrification movement." *European Journal of Creative Practices in Cities and Landscapes* 3.1 (2020): 73-94.

36 Christian Kravagna. "Arbeit an der Gemeinschaft. Modelle partizipatorischer Praxis." *Die Kunst des Öffentlichen* (1998): 28-46.

37 Lidegaard, Nuccio, and Bille, "Fostering and Planning Urban Regeneration: The Governance of Cultural Districts in Copenhagen."

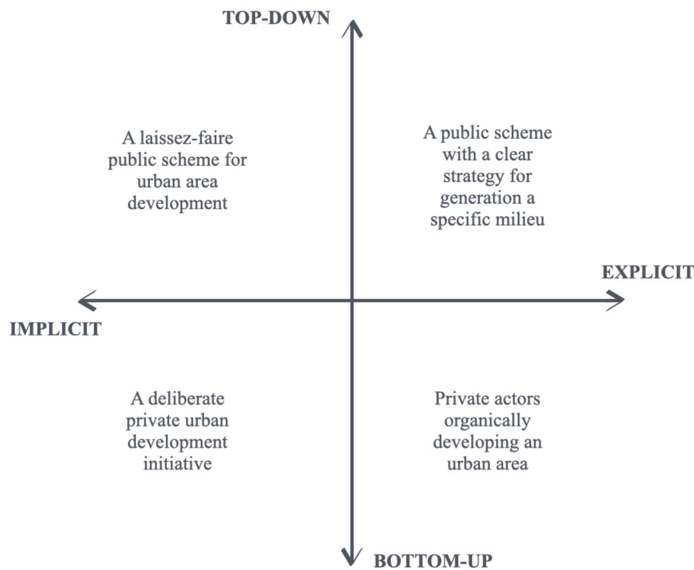

FIG. 1 Governance dimensions in urban clusters. Source: Adapted from Lidegaard et al (2017).

Methodology

The previous section has discussed culture-led urban regeneration and cultural planning, highlighting the general disagreement on approaches and objectives in theory and practice. Exploring the mechanisms of agglomeration dynamics within cultural districts, this research inquiries into how can policymakers foster and support spontaneous order and subcluster formation, regarding the case study of Manifattura delle Arti in Bologna?

A case study approach was employed to conduct an in-depth analysis of the area. The context of Bologna is suitable for investigating the top-down bottom-up dilemma, as the city shows a strong emphasis on culture both from a policy and a civil society point of view. Indeed, on the one hand, the city shows a high density of associations and grassroots initiatives. On the other hand, the municipality shows great interest in cultural and urban regeneration policies, demonstrated by high spending on cultural initiatives.[38] The data collection is based on 14 semi-structured interviews with the key actors working in the cluster, such as directors, cultural employees and stakeholders involved in the governance of the area and the municipality. A purposive sampling approach was adopted. To determine the population for this research, a comprehensive mapping of the district Manifattura delle Arti was conducted. First, the institutional and founding organisations of the district were selected, these are MAMbo, Cineteca,

38 Morea and Sabatini, "The Joint Contribution of Grassroots Artistic Practices to the Alternative and Vital City. The Case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)."

Damslab and Cassero LGBTQIA+ centre. A snowball sampling approach was then employed to identify participants with direct knowledge of the case study, allowing the researcher to familiarise with the district and gather a larger sample of organisations and perspectives. This resulted in 14 semi-structured interviews with individuals with several years of experience within the sector and in some cases within the district. This provided a historical perspective on the transformation of the district and the main milestones that led to the creation of the Manifattura delle Arti. Furthermore, belonging to very different organisations and having various experiences provides a variety of views on the topic. The interviews have been conducted between April and July 2023, mostly in person and always according to the preferences of the participants. Interviews lasted on average 45 minutes. The researchers have followed an interview guide that entails the perception of the district, social dimension, and cultural policy (see Appendix).

	ORGANISATION	SINCE	SETTING
R1	Fondazione Innovazione Urbana	2017	Offline 13/04/2023
R2	DAMSLAB	2019	Offline 17/04/2023
R3	LOCALEDUE	2014	Online 19/04/2023
R4	MAMBO	2018	Offline 19/04/2023
R5	BAM - strategie culturali	2012	Online 21/04/2023
R6	CINETECA	1993	Offline 21/04/2023
R7	Fondazione Innovazione Urbana	2019	Online 26/04/2023
R8	MAMBO	2017	Online 28/04/2023
R9	CASSERO LGBTQIA+ CENTRE	1995	Online 04/05/2023
R10	GalleriaPiù	2013	Online 09/05/2023
R11	ANT- district researcher	2005	Online 10/05/2023
R12	DRY ART	2007	Online 22/05/2023
R13	PARSEC	2020	Online 21/07/2023
R14	PARSEC	2020	Online 21/07/2023

TAB. 1 Sample's overview

Finally, a thematic analysis of the interview transcripts was performed using the software Atlas.TI to identify patterns and themes within the data. The thematic analysis resulted in two main themes which, together, answer the research question: (1) The planned district incites a spontaneous order and a subcluster and (2) The civil society as an engine of regeneration and inclusion. Table 2 shows the themes and their adherence to the reviewed literature.

Secondary themes	Description	Literature
THE PLANNED DISTRICT INCITES A SPONTANEOUS ORDER AND A SUBCLUSTER	The spontaneous district follows the dynamics of agglomeration; in contrast, there is a lack of identity and synergy in the planned district.	Andersson (1985) Bathelet et. Al (2004) Florida (2002) Hall (1998) Lavanga (2020) Lidegaard et. Al (2017) Marshall (1890) Mommaas (2004) Montgomery (2003) Porter (2000) Santagata (2002) Scott (2004) Stern and seifert (2010)
THE CIVIL SOCIETY IS THE ENGINE OF REGENERATION AND INCLUSION	The bottom-up organizations involve the community while the institutional district is perceived as less accessible by the residents.	Andres and Grésillon (2013) Florida (2017) Garcia (2004) Jacobs (1961) Leslie & Catungal (2012) Morea & Sabatini (2023) Peck (2005) Redaelli (2019) Rich (2017)

TAB. 2 Overview of the themes. Source: Author's elaboration. Source: Elaboration of the authors.

Case study: Manifattura delle Arti

Manifattura delle Arti is a planned cluster implemented in the early 2000s, during Bologna 2000 European Capital of Culture. The transformation included funds from the municipality, the region, the university and the European Union and costs more than 500.000.000 Euros. The strategy entailed converting a former trade fair building into a cultural district by bringing together various cultural institutions that were previously located in other parts of Bologna. Manifattura delle Arti includes: the Ex Manifattura Tabacchi park, which has been renamed Parco 11 Settembre, the renowned Cineteca (Bologna's Film Archive) situated in the former tobacco factory, along with its theatre, library, and archives. Additionally, the former slaughterhouse complex houses studio spaces for the University of Bologna's Department of Music and Performing Arts. Other components of the MdA include the University of Bologna's Department of Communication Studies, in the former Mulino Tamburi, the Museum of Modern Art (MAMbo) situated in the former municipal bakery, and the national headquarters of Arcigay, Italy's leading organisation for LGBTQIA+culture and rights, which is housed in the former salt storage building. Furthermore, the district incorporates a 550-space underground parking facility, a nursery school, a community centre called "Casa di quartiere CostArena", student housing, and municipal low-income housing (Porto15). It is worth noting that the MdA was intentionally designed to merge cultural institutions with social welfare establishments[39].

39 Aiello, "From Wound to Enclave: The Visual-Material Performance of Urban Renewal in Bologna's Manifattura Delle Arti."

Results

Two main themes have been developed from the analysis of the interview data. The in-depth interviews revealed that (1) the planned district incites a spontaneous order and a subcluster and (2) civil society is the engine of regeneration and inclusion. The former regards the dynamics inside the district, and the latter the relation with the territory.

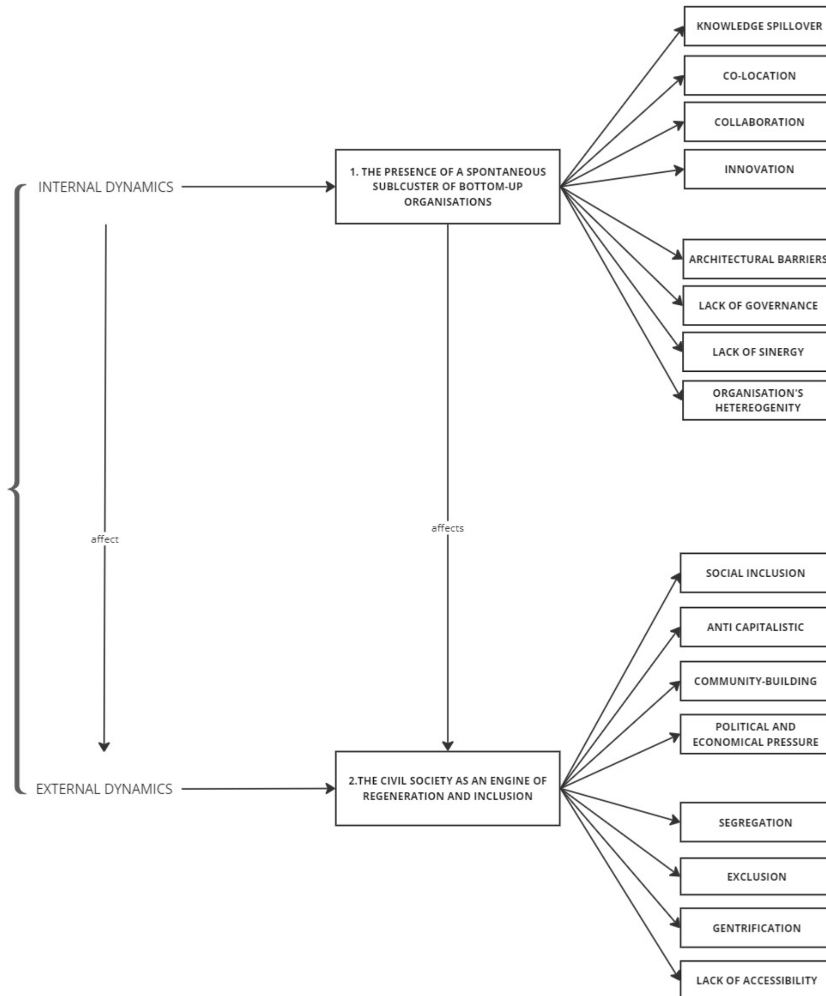

FIG. 1 Data structure. Source: Elaboration of the authors

Within the planned district, the presence of a spontaneous subcluster of bottom-up organizations was unveiled. Friction between the two souls of the district, with consist of the founding institutions and the spontaneous cluster of galleries and private organisations, emerged. Such tensions also results in a lack of synergy between the institutional and the spontaneous actors and it is also echoed by the local community. Ultimately, it appears that civil society is the key engine of regeneration and inclusion.

Figure 2 presents a summary of the secondary themes and the primary codes, such as the coding three applied in this analysis.

The planned district incites a spontaneous order and a subcluster

While MdA is a project of cultural planning and culture-led top-down urban regeneration, the interviews highlighted distinctly that what here works as a cluster is not something that was planned. Instead, a subcluster developed spontaneously, following the dynamics of agglomeration and clusters. The director of one art gallery posits: "I was the third private commercial reality to open in the area and the intentions were to act as a corollary to the MAMbo, later there were three other non-profit spaces that opened in this area as well." The high cultural density and the resulting resonance effect present in the district emerged as determinant factors for co-location. As stated by interviewee 6: "There is a resonance effect. If you carry out an initiative within that area, it's an area that has its own name and prestige." According to Molotch,[40] associating cultural products and businesses with a particular place, area or building has demonstrated the ability to create a positive image and enhance the reputation of the actors involved over time. Moreover, in the disclosed cluster of bottom-up activities, it is possible to recognize the importance of proximity, strong collaboration, and knowledge spillover. As stated by respondent 8: "Working together with other organizations allows you to increase your audiences and also mix professional knowledge." As testified by the owner of one of the galleries located in the cluster: "I wanted to open my gallery precisely to be close to the realities with which I absolutely speak the same language". In line with Florida, the creative class follows some trends, such as the tendency to cluster in specific places which the author calls "creative centers". Florida[41] pointed out many reasons why these exceptional individuals decide to locate themself and their creative activities in these places, among which openness to all types of diversity. Moreover, tolerance is seen as a catalyst that promotes openness and encourages the flourishing of artistic communities.[42] Considering this, Bologna in general is renowned for being an inclusive and tolerant city,[43] but specifically the context of the district is also such. For example, thanks to the Cassero LGBTQIA+ Centre, many activities are carried out under the banner of inclusion. As confirmed by respondent 11: "In that area there is an absolutely strong theme of integration from the point of view of gender preferences, which are seen as bearers of value." However, basing this association within the district was not at all random, rather, it was a conscious intervention along the guidlines of the "creative city" model. Indeed, as stated by Florida: "cities must attract the new "creative class" with hip

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40 Molotch, *Place in Product*.

41 Florida, *Cities and the Creative Class*.

42 Franco Bianchini and Michael Parkinson, eds. *Cultural policy and urban regeneration: the West European experience*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1993).

43 Morea and Sabatini, "The Joint Contribution of Grassroots Artistic Practices to the Alternative and Vital City. The Case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)."

neighborhoods, an arts scene and a gay-friendly atmosphere."[44]

For these reasons, it can be said that the subcluster of galleries was stimulated by the originally planned district, as a high-density cultural reality and an open and stimulating environment were created from above, attracting other cultural businesses to the area. This can be seen as a success of cultural planning, which provided an opportunity to foster spontaneity and innovation. Indeed, especially in the creative industries, smaller enterprises are considered the primary drivers of innovation[45]. Furthermore, Porter's idea of localized competitive advantage as a powerful motivator for innovation is also reflected in this environment, since the cluster of contemporary galleries has a strong predisposition for innovation and is home to some of the most experimental contemporary galleries in Italy, such as P420: "P420 gallery has always done incredibly niche work, but incredibly explosive in terms of both research and market" (Interviewee 3). Further, the director of one of the galleries stated: "We have made a difference in terms of the very scene of contemporary research in the city over the last 10 years" (Interviewee 9). In line with Florida (2002), the high density of creative people results in a high density of innovation and provides significant evidence of regional vitality. Moreover, according to Stern and Seifert,[46] spontaneous cultural clusters emphasize the dynamic interaction within the contemporary art scene, as confirmed by the case study. Indeed, as reported by the director of one of the main galleries located in the district: "On many occasions we manage to open the galleries in a synergetic way". Again, proximity and co-location emerged as beneficial factors which favoured the generation, dissemination and exchange of knowledge and network creation.[47] Through face-to-face interactions, the physical coexistence of individuals and companies in the same sector and place has created the 'buzz' referred to by Bathelt et al.,[48] in contrast to the institutional district, where a lack of communication emerged. The curator of an independent exhibition space added: "When they (the other galleries) first moved to where they are today, they were clearly in dialogue with us, forming what was called the MAMbo zone. The average tour if visitor of the Bologna art scenewas Galleriapiù, CARDRDE, localedue and then P420". The combination of these factors resulted in a ferment of artistic and cultural activities, not only the galleries mentioned above (Galleriapiù, P420, CARDRDE), but also many grassroots initiatives. Furthermore, during the interviews several references to these bottom-up organizations came out, often referred to as the most active and interrelated in the

44 Florida, "The rise of the creative class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community, and everyday life."

45 Towse, *A Textbook of Cultural Economics*.

46 Stern and Seifert, "Cultural Clusters: The Implications of Cultural Assets Agglomeration for Neighborhood Revitalization."

47 Lavanga, "Cultural Districts."

48 Bathelt, Malmberg, and Maskell, "Clusters and Knowledge: Local Buzz, Global Pipelines and the Process of Knowledge Creation."

district. Those that have been mapped are the association Dry Art, the art collective PARSEC, the independent space Localedue, and the centre for artistic experimentation and research DAS. It was particularly significant for the research's objectives to discover that bottom-up organizations exhibit superior effectiveness in their relationships, in contrast to the lack of synergy observed among institutional organizations. Indeed, the main attempts at networking in the district and collaboration come from the bottom-up organizations, "between those who were talking to each other" (interviewee 3). The director of one of the main galleries in the district affirmed: "Certainly the relations among us private businesspeople are very good, we have a continuous dialogue." In addition to that, interviewee 2 claimed: "There is a bottom-up attempt to actually try to create a network within the Manifattura while not directly involving the main actors of Manifattura itself." It is precisely from the Dry Art association, for example, that the initiative called 'Made in Manifattura' was born, which consists of a showcasing and networking event of the organizations of MdA to work on a shared agenda.

A difference between the two souls of the district, meaning the one represented by the founding institutions and the spontaneous cluster of galleries and private organizations, emerged. This duality is reflected in a different degree of relationship and synergies between these two levels. On the one hand, the identity of the planned district is not perceived and a lack of synergy among the institutional organizations has been pointed out. Indeed, the founder and institutional organisations of the district do not recognise the actual existence and functioning of the district. As stated by interviewee 12: "there is little awareness of belonging to such an important area." This aspect of "knowledgeability"[49] can be communicated by many tools, such as brochures, press releases or fliers. The only attempt to state the identity of the district as a synergic network was made by the museum MAMbo consisting in a panel with a map of all the organisations located in the district. Successful cultural districts exhibit a design ethos, often reflected in architectural homogenization. However, many interviewees highlighted specific elements, such as the entrance totems of the Manifattura delle Arti, as examples of failure in creating and communicating the district's identity (Figure 1). As stated by respondent 5: "Around the district there are ugly tall glass totems with the words Manifattura delle Arti written on them, which are 20 years old and falling apart, nobody is taking them down, restoring them, or doing anything with them, and they are testimony to the fact that right now nobody is interested in talking about this project."

Moreover, among the reasons for the lack of interaction between the district's founding organisations emerged the issue of architectural barriers.

49 Montgomery, John. "Cities and the Art of Cultural Planning." *Planning Practice and Research* 5, no. 3 (1990): 17–24.

FIG. 3 Glass totem in Manifattura delle Arti (Copyright: Liola Urso).

Indeed, 5 respondents mentioned a disconnection among the organisations due to the physical disposition of spaces. Interviewee 8 argued: "The district itself on an architectural level was also designed and conceived as a bit of a barrier, it is a small ghetto." In particular, many interviewees complained about the situation of Cavaticcio Park, the park which all the institutions overlook and that should act as a link between them, but which in fact acts as a dividing element. The Cavaticcio, a historic canal, had remained buried for almost a century until the regeneration project brought it back to its original form and visibility. As claimed by the director of one of the main organizations in the district: "From an architectural point of view, however, it can be said that the project Manifattura delle Arti is somehow unfinished because this bridge, which was supposed to connect the two banks of the Cavaticcio and thus directly link Mambo and the Cineteca to Damslab, was never built, and this certainly causes disconnect since, although there is this physical proximity of the institutions, they all look outside the Manifattura delle Arti, not inside." Interviewee 2, who works in Damslab, explained: "The Cavaticcio brings us all together, but until we don't think about that as a common place and a common

good of this reality and begin to see what is inside this place and begin to invest in this place as a space on which we can actually create synergies it will be difficult to overcome these difficulties." This perception is aligned with another consideration elaborated by interviewee 7: "A first consideration that has to do with urban planning, when the restructuring was considered, the park was not considered as a connecting element of passage and exchange. So, this is an initial point that has to do with urban planning and how much urban planning also conditions the use of spaces." Indeed, this issue pertains to the physical layout and spatial arrangement of urban functions which influence relationships and interactions in the district. According to Jacobs,[50] a creative environment necessitates infrastructure that provides for permeability and accessibility, whereas the former refers to good internal and exterior possibilities for personal transit and communication. In this regard, the lack of a governance model to coordinate the various organizations and strengthen synergy was complained of by many respondents. As interviewee 3 claimed, "It was never possible to create a real network between the spaces. Partly because the resources were not there, in the sense that there was perhaps a lack of a higher element that could coordinate it both conceptually and economically". This aspect is reflected in the lack of relations and synergy among the institutions within the district. Furthermore, the director of one of the main organizations claimed: "The various institutions are often left to themselves, there is no specific project. So, if you leave it to these institutions to organize themselves, they won't do it on their own, they have no reason to set up a permanent round table, perhaps they don't see the point". Interviewee 5 summarized the issue at hand: "We are talking territorially about something quite unique, but it is not interpreted as a district, it is not narrated as a district, and it does not work as a district, the individual organizations that are part of this territorial neighborhood are left to their own initiative to build things." The perception from many interviewees is that the district was planned from above, but dropped without detail and without curated interventions that would strengthen the identity of the district and foster synergy between the actors. Recalling the governance matrix elaborated by Lidegaard et al.[51] (figure 1) it can be inferred that in the case of Manifattura delle Arti an explicit top-down approach was employed, with an emerged, possibly not intended, laissez-faire scheme. As stressed by Lidegaard et al., bottom-up tactics are governed by a laissez-faire attitude and frequently evolve and raise spontaneously, allowing for 'self-grown' and experimenting. Furthermore, according to Stern and Seifert[52], spontaneous cultural clusters have the

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50 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. (New York: Random House 1961).

51 Lidegaard, Nuccio, and Bille, "Fostering and Planning Urban Regeneration: The Governance of Cultural Districts in Copenhagen."

52 Stern and Seifert, "Cultural Clusters: The Implications of Cultural Assets Agglomeration for Neighborhood Revitalization."

potential to revitalize urban economies by actively engaging residents and revitalizing neighborhoods. What emerged from the interviews is indeed that bottom-up initiatives, such as galleries, associations, and nonprofit spaces, stimulate civic engagement and contribute to social cohesion with a greater degree of openness and permeability to the community compared to the institutional ones. The critical aspect relates to a possibly unclear position of the public planners, whose laissez-faire approach might have not been intended, or at least declared, which might explain why the organizations of MdA complain about a lack of support. This theme leads the way to the relation between the district and the territory.

Civil society is the engine of regeneration and inclusion

There is a strong connection among clusters and the territory in which they developed and operate.[53] Cultural districts establish significant associations with the specific location, encompassing their community and historical background. As mentioned in the previous section, a stronger community involvement has been observed by the bottom-up sphere of the district. Similarly, the relations with the neighborhood are also animated and sustained by mainly grassroots forces. Thanks to their nature of experimentation and openness, in fact, these bottom-up initiatives have succeeded in engaging the inhabitants and frequenters of the neighborhood. For example, the curator of one of these independent spaces said that during some events they "had people from the neighborhood sleeping inside the space." And furthermore, respondent 3 explained: "When we did the strangest events, we involved the community. I mean, it's not that we were trying to involve the community and we had as a goal to involve them, simply certain things that we did naturally involve them." Thus, also the association Dry Art, promoted with the festival Made in Manifattura "Activities of various kinds dedicated mainly to the inhabitants of the area and therefore also very accessible in economic terms" (Interviewee 12). Thanks to their volunteer and no-profit nature, these organizations overcome the traditional capitalist framework of the "creative city."[54] Many respondents mentioned Mercato Ritrovato (a sustainable farmers' market) as the main form of aggregation and of community inclusion in the neighborhood. The initiative was raised as a requalification action: "precisely with a proposal for the redevelopment of the two main squares where the market takes place, which are Piazzetta Pasolini, and the one inside the former slaughterhouse complex" (Interviewee 6). In general, it has emerged from several testimonies that the main work on community and regeneration is done from the bottom-up. It is worth

53 Lavanga, The Cultural District. In Towse, R., & Hernández, T. N. (2020). *Handbook of Cultural Economics*, Third Edition. Edward Elgar Publishing.

54 Leslie & Catungal "Social Justice and the Creative City: Class, Gender and Racial Inequalities".

noticing that in this case, following that spontaneity with which associations are permeated, we are not facing the issue of "othering."[55] Kravagna criticized artists who engage marginalized communities under the hat of education, drawing a parallel between these artists and evangelizing missionaries. The grassroots organizations which operate in MdA involve the community without stigmatizing "the other." Simultaneously, a lack of adherence between residents and the institutional district was also mentioned as problematic, mostly because of economic issues. For instance, the admission ticket constitutes a serious barrier which stresses "the lack of permeability between the neighborhood and thus the residents, between the cultural institutions and the community." This perspective was confirmed by one of the employees of the MAMbo: "I often wondered how much the museum was visited by the residents of this neighborhood and in my opinion not so much, there are many people who have never been inside the museum."

In line with previous research,[56] city revitalization efforts frequently encounter issues such as disconnection, distortion and lack of community involvement, resulting in a lack of identity and long-term viability. This feeling of exclusion and disconnect was noticed by a few of the respondents, for example, interviewee 3 argued: "We have gone from a peaceful disintegration, i.e., where different subjects cohabited the territory while not talking to each other, to a time when under the umbrella of dialogue there has been an exclusion of certain subjects." Moreover, despite the urban revitalization efforts undertaken during the establishment of the district, significant disturbances and deterioration persist within the vicinity. Many respondents referred to drug activity and danger, especially in green areas, such as Cavaticcio Park and 11 Settembre Park. This partially disproves the perspective of cultural policies as a vehicle for community building and requalification. On the contrary, the responsibility of keeping the area alive seems to be left to grassroots organizations and civil society associations. Among the founders' organizations of the district, the one that acts most on the community and neighborhood is the Cassero LGBTQIA+ association. As stated by interviewee 6: "Cassero plays a very important role in the area since they provide so many services to the community. (…) For instance, they offer support for gender violence, psychological support, and first assistance for homeless people. So, it certainly has an important impact from a social point of view." And again, a worker of Cassero added that they "try to leave the world a little better than we found it and believe that bringing artistic experiences as close as possible to people's lives is what then generates a real impact by seeing the audience not as a passive subject, but as an active participant in the dynamic of fruition and participation in the cultural work."

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55 Kravagna, "Arbeit an der Gemeinschaft," 31.

56 García, "Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration in Western European Cities: Lessons from Experience, Prospects for the Future."

MdA is a significant illustration of how urban renewal solidifies the influence of advanced capitalism.[57] Moreover, as Klunzman observes, every tale of urban regeneration commences with artistic expression and concludes with real estate.[58] Indeed, 7 respondents out of 14, referred to an increment in the house pricing. As stated by interviewee 6: "(...) the residential properties that exist in the surrounding area obviously had an increase in their value." Thus, in line with Markusen,[59] the Creative Class can lead to gentrification, indicated by real estate prices. Indeed, according to respondent 12: "There has been a radical change in the perception of this neighbourhood, which has also changed the cost of flats nearby. It has gone up a lot." This was confirmed also by interviewee 10, who looks at the sense of place: "Before, this was actually a working-class neighborhood, so in the early periods this redevelopment plan was not so well received because it raised drastically the rents and some people also had parts of their land expropriated because of the Cavaticcio redevelopment." While these quotes do not prove any correlation between the MdA and the real estate prices, the perception of the neighborhood as increasingly gentrifying seems to connect to a larger city-wide phenomenon of which our participants seem well-aware: "In Bologna, house prices are skyrocketing, and it is not that it is Manifattura delle Arti that has affected them so much in that area, it is others who are responsible" (respondent 3). However, In response to the housing crisis, within the MdA project, the first entirely public co-housing initiative in Italy, called Porto15, had been implemented by the municipality. The project traces back to its beginnings in 2009, and it ended in 2017. The ambitious plan involved two main stages: firstly, developing the housing project, and secondly, establishing a cohesive community of residents to inhabit it. As explained by interviewee 12: "The municipality's objective would be to extend this model throughout this district, which would have the perfect characteristics to be a pilot to test how this melting pot between different social situations can generate integration."

According to some respondents, this is as an attempt to camouflage gentrification processes created by top-down policies, echoing a trend that has been empirically investigated elsewhere.[60]

Overall, a laissez-faire approach emerged which encouraged spontaneity such as grassroots initiatives and associations. These realities are seen by the municipality as pivotal in promoting social interaction and facilitating

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57 Giorgia Aiello, "From wound to enclave: The visual-material performance of urban renewal in Bologna's Manifattura delle Arti." *Western Journal of Communication* 75.4 (2011): 341-366. Leslie and Catungal, "Social Justice and the Creative City: Class, Gender and Racial Inequalities"; Peck, " Struggling with the Creative Class".

58 Klunzman " Keynote speech to Intereg III Mid-term Conference, Lille, in: Regeneration and Renewal".

59 Markusen, "Urban Development and the Politics of a Creative Class: Evidence from a Study of Artists".

60 Meghan Ashlin Rich. "'Artists are a tool for gentrification': maintaining artists and creative production in arts districts." *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 25.6 (2019): 727-742.

the development of human and urban flourishing[61]. However, the associations active on the territory feel that the municipality is somehow using them to "do their job and solve social issues without adequately repaying them for this service" (respondent 14). Thus, the role of planning as enabler and facilitator, as exemplified by Lidegaard et al, cannot be seen as a solution but, rather, as a starting point for public administrations, which will still need to engage actively with the local civil society.

Conclusion

The question whether it is possible to plan something that by nature tends to arise spontaneously, and what this entails is the subject of this research. Specifically, this article has attempted to answer the following research question: how can policymakers foster and support spontaneous order and subcluster formation, with regard to the case study of Manifattura delle Arti in Bologna?

Using a case study, this article addressed the research question in order to inform effective policy approaches. The study was conducted through 14 interviews with key actors working in the cluster, such as directors and cultural employees in the organizations and institutions of the district and other stakeholders involved in the governance of the area and of the municipality.

The research unveiled two main results: the presence of a spontaneous subcluster of bottom-up organizations within the planned district and the civil society as an engine of regeneration and inclusion. The study contributes to the dilemma of top-down and bottom-up strategies in cultural planning. The results support Lindgaard et al.'s advocacy for a laissez-faire approach, as it instigates innovation and creativity reflected in the spontaneous cluster of bottom-up organizations, as well as social inclusion and requalification promoted by the associations operating within the district. However, as emerged from both themes, such an approach needs a sustained support from local authorities, so to avoid tensions within the spontaneous cluster and between the cluster and the territory that may hinder social, economic, and cultural innovation. Recalling Andres and Grésillon[62], in the case of MdA, the "branding cultural brownfield" strategy has been implemented without considering the community and without long-run planning. Therefore, this has given space to an "alternative cultural brownfield", which has developed a strong social and community focus while suffering from political and economic pressures. At the same time, these grassroots activities risk disappearing as a result of the incapacity to respond and cope with the external economic, cultural and

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61 Morea and Sabatini, "The Joint Contribution of Grassroots Artistic Practices to the Alternative and Vital City. The Case of Bologna and Venice (Italy)."

62 Andres and Grésillon, " Cultural brownfields in European cities: a new mainstream object for cultural and urban policies"

political pressures.

Normatively interpreted, these findings suggest that policymakers should embrace laissez-faire but with a sustained enabling and supporting role. Understanding the efficient practices and policies that have emerged after 20 years of Manifattura delle Arti is crucial, especially in light of upcoming projects such as The District of Creativity officially initiated in the adjacent area by the municipality of Bologna with an investment of 57 million euros of public funds.[63]

Nevertheless, some limitations in the research can be pointed out. First, a single case-study restricts the generalizability of the findings to other contexts. Additionally, our qualitative approach, employing thematic analysis of interviews with 14 organizational representatives involved in the MdA, limits the scope of the perspectives captured. Importantly, the exclusion of residents, citizens, and neighboring organizations from our sample may have overlooked valuable insights and perspectives crucial to understanding the project's broader impact and reception within the community. Furthermore, our study did not delve into potential concauses or external factors influencing the phenomena under investigation, which may have provided a more comprehensive understanding of the project's outcomes. Future research might expand on this, possibly with a multi-case approach.

63 Comune di Bologna. (29 March 2024). Area ex Ravone passes to the Municipality of Bologna [Press release]. Retrieved from https://www.comune.bologna.it/notizie/area-ex-ravone-passa-comune-bologna (last accessed: 12 May 2024)

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Appendix A
Interview Guide

Personal Questions

- Demographic information (name, age, gender, etc.)
- Could you briefly summarise your function, activities and responsibilities?
- How long have you been working within the cultural organisation/foundation?
- As a cultural worker, was there a particular reason you chose to work with/in the Manifattura District? If yes, what was it?

Perception of the District

- How would you describe the Manifattura District?
- Could you describe the main changes you have noticed in the Porto district since the Manifattura project was implemented?
- What are the main functions of this space in your opinion? And what are the main benefits for the organisations operating there?
- Do you perceive the District as a synergy, do you feel part of a cluster?
- Do you feel that the Cultural District has an influence on the surrounding area and community?
- What are the main problems you encounter in your organisation or in relation to others?
- Why do you think there are such difficulties?

Social Dimension

- Who are the main actors involved in the functioning of the District?
- Could you describe the type of relationships you have with other organisations in the District? Do you usually collaborate with other cultural organisations? If yes, could you tell me which ones and on what occasions?

Cultural Policy

- Do you think that the municipality supports the organisations within the Manifattura? If so, through which instruments?
- In your opinion, does the municipality cooperate with the organisations present in the District, including those of a non-institutional/private nature? If yes, in what way?
- Do you think that the community is actively involved in the cluster and its initiatives? If yes, in what way?

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MAIN SECTION

Immersive Urban Narratives: Public Urban Exhibit and Mapping Socio-Environmental Justice

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ABSTRACT

This research project and exhibit, delves into the complex relationship between public exhibition, urban spaces, and socio-political norms in shaping urban thresholds within the two American and European metropolitan cities of Houston and Amsterdam. This study also investigates the transformative power of new media and emerging technologies in the production, circulation, and consumption of design, offering fresh perspectives on the influence of these technologies on urban design studies and digitally augmented physical spaces. By merging interdisciplinary research areas, including Design Computation and Fabrication, Urban Communities, and Spatial Justice, this project provides an immersive exploration into the co-production of liminal spaces, focusing on the participation of diverse publics and the dynamics of inclusion, exclusion, and recognition in two cities of Houston and Amsterdam. The main emphasis of this paper is on the critical urban studies and the role of emerging technologies in advancing the theoretical and methodological frameworks of the presented immersive installation project.

KEYWORDS
Public Art and Exhibit; Liminal Spaces; Socio-Environmental Justice; Critical Mapping; Urban Communities

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Introduction

Liminal spaces in urban environments are the in-between spaces, transition zones that are neither here nor there, neither enclosed nor entirely open. They exist as transformative spaces that challenge traditional spatial configurations and serve as platforms for catalyzing socio-environmental change.[1] However, the production of these liminal spaces is often skewed by existing power structures, leading to the exclusion of marginalized communities and a failure to incorporate the rich tapestry of urban diversity.[2] This research seeks to invert this norm by promoting a co-production approach to these liminal spaces, foregrounding the idea that these spaces are shared commons, shaped by and responsive to the public's multifaceted identities and experiences.[3] An interdisciplinary and multi-scalar design process was followed, leveraging digital technologies to enable the active participation of a diverse set of stakeholders and participants in designing and producing these liminal spaces in both Houston and Amsterdam.[4] Moreover, a critical aspect of the study addresses the predicaments marginalized communities, and immigrant populations face within the urban context. By dissecting the covert operations of power structures, the research underscores the tendency of these mechanisms to homogenize social dynamics within urban commons.[5] The notion of diversity is brought to the forefront, advocating for reevaluating social inclusion and integration strategies within the cityscape.[6]

The project is undertaken by an interdisciplinary team of faculty and students from Texas Tech University. The team investigates the intersection of urban design, architecture, politics, humanities, and socio-environmental justice in two cities—Houston, Texas, and Amsterdam, Netherlands. Their collaborative pedagogical approach aims to deepen the understanding of these complex urban contexts. The central objective is to amplify the discourse on socio-environmental justice in urban design through a collaborative, multidisciplinary, and educational approach.[7] By engaging with visitors and presenting findings in an accessible manner, the project creates an interactive learning environment that promotes dialogue

1 Auge, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995.

2 Harvey, David. *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*. Verso, 2013.

3 Mitchell, William J. *City of Bits: Space, Place, and the Infobahn*. MIT Press, 1996.

4 Kris Rutten in the article "Participation, Art and Digital culture" investigates the transformative role of technology in art and culture, covering areas such as technology's integration in artistic practices for enhanced interaction, cultural (re)mediation through digitization, the transformative influence of digital platforms on public access to museum collections, and the cultural implications of literary crowdsourcing in the realm of online participatory culture. See Rutten, Kris. 2018. "Participation, Art and Digital Culture." *Critical Arts* 32, no. 3: 1-8.

5 Lefebvre, Henri. *Writings on Cities*. Blackwell Publishers, 1996.

6 Mostafavi, Sina, and Mehan, Asma. 2023. "De-coding Visual Cliches and Verbal Biases: Hybrid Intelligence and Data Justice." In *Diffusions in Architecture: Artificial Intelligence and Image Generators*, 150–159. Wiley.

7 Mehan, Asma, and Mostafavi, Sina. 2023b. "Temporalities and the Urban Fabric. Co-producing Liminal Spaces in Transitional Epochs." *UOU Scientific Journal* 6: 116–125.

and further exploration. This cooperative educational venture is crucial to the project, facilitating the sharing of knowledge and insights with a broader audience. The project merges multiple streams of research into a cohesive, immersive, full-scale installation to be showcased at the Venice Biennale Exhibition 2023.

Recent advancements in digital design, fabrication technologies, and the pressing need for interdisciplinary research in design practice and education fuel this undertaking.[8] Consequently, the project spans various scales, from micro-level innovative materialization practices to macro-level critical urban studies. To unify these scales, the 'physical' concept is employed,[9] which harnesses emerging technologies to bridge the divide between the digital and physical realms.[10] In doing so, users are provided with a seamless and immersive experience, allowing simultaneous navigation of both domains.[11]

The installation incorporates multiple layers of data and analysis overlaid through interactive augmented reality trails. This approach allows visitors to engage with the research findings in captivating and immersive manners. The amalgamation of digital and physical elements crafts visitors a comprehensive and interactive experience.[12] With these innovative tools, visitors can delve deeper into understanding the intricate nature of socio-environmental justice in urban thresholds.[13]

This installation amalgamates three interconnected scopes derived from diverse research and interdisciplinary explorations: Design Computation, Fabrication, Urban Design, Community Development and Spatial Justice. Each of these facets contributes distinct yet intertwined perspectives towards the comprehensive understanding and reimagining of urban spaces.[14] This research is carried out as part of two graduate design studios at Texas Tech University, led by the authors. One studio concentrated on design computation, while the other focused on urban community

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8 Manovich, Lev. *The Language of New Media*. MIT Press, 2016. ISBN: 978-0262632553.

9 The concept of 'phygital' represents the blending of the physical and the digital realms, particularly as it relates to customer experience, digital technology, and physical spaces. See DeMers, Jayson. "The 'Phygital' World: How Technology Will Bridge the Gap Between Physical and Digital." *Forbes*, 2017.

10 Williams, A.S., et al. "Augmented Reality for City Planning." In *Virtual, Augmented and Mixed Reality. Design and Interaction*. HCII 2020, edited by J.Y.C. Chen and G. Fragomeni, Lecture Notes in Computer Science (), vol 12190, Springer, Cham, 2020. DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-49695-1_17.

11 Milovanovic, Julie, Guillaume Moreau, Daniel Siret, and Francis Miguet. "Virtual and Augmented Reality in Architectural Design and Education: An Immersive Multimodal Platform to Support Architectural Pedagogy." *Presented at Future Trajectories of Computation in Design*, 17th International Conference, CAAD Futures 2017, Istanbul, Turkey, July 2017.

12 Schäfer, Mirko Tobias, and Karin van Es, eds. *The Datafied Society: Studying Culture through Data*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2017.

13 Bird, Robert. "Andrei Tarkovsky and Contemporary Art: Medium and Mediation." Tate Papers, no. 10 (2008). ISSN 1753-9854. https://www.tate.org.uk/documents/370/tate_papers_10_robert_bird_andrei_tarkovsky_and_contemporary_art_medium_and_me_oJWxzDu.pdf

14 Foth, Marcus, Martin Brynskov, and Timo Ojala, eds. *Citizen's Right to the Digital City: Urban Interfaces, Activism, and Placemaking*. Singapore: Springer, 2015.

design.[15] Both studios played an important role in shaping the research methodology, emphasizing the intersection of computational design, AR-enabled assembly, and urban community design and development dynamics. The culmination of this research has been presented to the global architectural community through an exhibit at the International Architectural Exhibition 2023 in Venice. From May 2023 through November 2023, visitors could immerse themselves in the research findings, reflecting on the critical themes of design computation, fabrication, and urban community development. Adding an innovative layer to the research-led public exhibition, the project featured an augmented reality component, visually mapping the data associated with socio-environmental justice in Amsterdam and Houston.[16] This virtual layer offers an interactive dimension to the physical installation, allowing visitors to explore the research dynamically and engagingly.[17]

Over sixty individuals have collaborated on this project, including students and faculty from Texas Tech University, external collaborators, and industrial partners from the US and the Europe. This collaboration embodies the project's spirit, demonstrating the importance of diverse perspectives and interdisciplinary teamwork in tackling complex urban and architectural challenges. Lastly, alternative methods for co-designing and co-creating urban thresholds are explored, highlighting the potential of digital design and fabrication in offering new tectonics and modalities.[18] This exploration is underscored by a firm commitment to challenge and reconfigure the sociopolitical norms governing our cities today, promoting a more inclusive, adaptable, and vibrant urban future.[19]

The next sections explore the theoretical framework as well as the research methodology related to co-production of urban liminal spaces and the research-led pursuit of socio-environmental justice. It employs interdisciplinary collaboration, comparative case studies in Houston and Amsterdam, and a multiscale approach. The paper emphasizes the need for critical reflection on these technological advancements and immersive urban narratives and concludes with remarks on the ongoing exploration of these evolving landscapes.

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15 Mehan, Asma. 2023e. "Visualizing Change in Radical Cities and Power of Imagery in Urban Transformation." *IMG Journal* 8: 182–201.

16 Mehan, Asma. 2023d. "The Role of Digital Technologies in Building Resilient Communities." Bhumi, *The Planning Research Journal* 33: 33–40.

17 Mehan, Asma. 2023c. "The Digital Agency, Protest Movements, and Social Activism During the COVID-19 Pandemic." In *AMPS Proceedings Series* 32, edited by G. K. Erk, 1–7. AMPS.

18 Mostafavi, Sina. 2021. "Hybrid Intelligence in Architectural Robotic Materialization (HI-ARM): Computational, Fabrication and Material Intelligence for Multi-mode Robotic Production of Multi-scale and Multi-material Systems." *a+BE | Architecture and the Built Environment* 12: 1–266.

19 Mehan, Asma. 2020. "Radical Inclusivity." In *Vademecum: 77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places*, 126–127. nai010 Publishers.

Co-Production of Liminal Spaces in Urban Environments

Liminality, originating from the Latin term "līmen" meaning "threshold," highlights the psychological effects that arise during periods of transition. Victor Turner's definition of limen, or "threshold," is essential in understanding the connection between revolutions and liminality.[20] "In-Between" or "Inside-Out" spaces are other expressions used to describe "liminal" spaces.[21]

"Liminal" is the adjective used to describe things associated with a threshold or transition point. Victor Turner's "processual" ritual analysis centers on the liminal phase, the second stage in a three-stage ritual process. This process begins with separation, which isolates the ritual subject from their previous structural condition.[22] The second stage, the liminal, is anti-structural, where few or none of the past attributes persist.[23] The final step is reintegration, where the individual settles back into a new social structure.

In their book "Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture"[24] Victor Turner and Judith Turner argue that the liminal stage involves one or all three types of separation: spatial, temporal, and social/moral. When ritual subjects are separated from familiar spaces, routine temporal orders, or the structures of moral obligations and social ties, they enter a liminal time/space.[25] Turner described "Communitas" as an intense feeling of community, solidarity, and togetherness experienced by those living in an anti-structure, where typical social statuses and positions are disrupted.[26]

Liminal spaces refer to transitional zones that exist between different states or conditions. The characteristics of liminality can be explained through objective parameters such as spatial, transportation, geographical, and administrative factors, as well as subjective criteria like traditions, social norms, and everyday practices.[27] They are neither entirely public nor private spaces, often acting as a site for the co-production of meaning

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20 Bigger, Stephen. "Victor Turner, Liminality, and Cultural Performance." *Journal of Beliefs & Values* 30, no. 2 (2009): 209–212.

21 Zimmerman, Patrick Troy. "Liminal Space in Architecture: Threshold and Transition." Master's Thesis, University of Tennessee, 2008. Accessed May 21, 2023. https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/453.

22 Turner, Victor. "Liminality and Communitas." In *The Ritual Process: Structure and Anti-Structure*, 94-130. Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969, pp. 166-167.

23 *Ibid*, p. 94.

24 Turner, Victor, and Edith Turner. *Image and Pilgrimage in Christian Culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

25 *Ibid*, p. 41.

26 Turner, "Liminality and Communitas,"166.

27 To read more about the various interpretations of liminality in the contemporary social sciences, see Thomassen, Bjørn. "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality." *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009): 5-27.

and culture.[28] A sense of ambiguity and openness characterizes these transitional spaces between fixed categories or states. They can be physical or virtual, created intentionally or spontaneously.[29] In urban environments, liminal spaces significantly shape the city's character and identity and provide opportunities for social interaction and cultural exchange.[30]

The politics of inside-outside pertains to power dynamics in relationships between different groups based on their location within a physical space.[31] These spaces often blur the boundaries between what is considered inside or outside and can challenge traditional notions of belonging and exclusion.[32] This can be particularly significant in contested heritage, where different communities and societal groups may claim ownership or control over a particular space or site.[33] In the process of decolonizing urban public spaces, liminal spaces can play a critical role. These spaces can provide a platform for marginalized communities to reclaim their unheard voices and cultural identities and resist dominant narratives imposed upon them.[34] Expanding on these definitions, this study identifies and explores four prototypical liminal spaces in the cities of Houston and Amsterdam.

Liminal spaces in urban environments are in-between spaces, transition zones that are neither here nor there, neither enclosed nor entirely open. They are transformative spaces that challenge traditional spatial configurations and serve as platforms for catalyzing socio-environmental change. However, the production of these liminal spaces is often skewed by existing power structures, leading to the exclusion of marginalized communities and a failure to incorporate the rich tapestry of urban diversity.[35] Consequently, this research seeks to invert this norm by promoting a co-production approach to these liminal spaces, foregrounding the idea that these spaces are shared commons, shaped by and responsive to the public's multifaceted identities and experiences.

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28 To read more about the concept of liminality in urban spaces, see Horvath, Agnes, Bjørn Thomassen, and Harald Wydra, eds. *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2015.

29 Shields, Rob. Lefebvre, *Love, and Struggle: Spatial Dialectics*. London: Routledge, 1999. This book explores Henri Lefebvre's ideas on urban spaces, which may provide a useful comparison to Turner's concept of liminality.

30 Auge, Marc. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. London: Verso, 1995.

31 Turner, Victor. *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967.

32 Ratto, Matt, and Megan Boler, eds. *DIY Citizenship: Critical Making and social media*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014.

33 Mehan, Asma. 2024b. "Digital Feminist Placemaking: The Case of the 'Woman, Life, Freedom' Movement." *Urban Planning* 9 (1).

34 Mehan, Asma, and Mostafavi, Sina. 2023a. "Building Resilient Communities Over Time." In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Futures*, 99–103. Springer International Publishing.

35 Mehan, Asma. 2024. "From Exported Modernism to Rooted Cosmopolitanism." In *Rooted Cosmopolitanism, Heritage and the Question of Belonging: Archaeological and Anthropological Perspectives*, edited by L. W. Kruijer, M. J. Versluys, and I. Lilley, 227–245. Taylor & Francis.

To create these spaces, an integrated design and assembly method was adopted, combining volumetric 3D printing with spatial lattice structures through a tetrahedron-based material system. This flexible system allows users to create bespoke structures that respond to various contexts. Moreover, the project promotes circularity and hybrid human-machine intelligence through resource and data-driven design workflows, integrating robotic and numerically controlled production techniques with human craft and augmented reality-assisted assembly. The installation becomes a liminal space, serving as an urban information hub that invites visitors to engage in an immersive experience, blurring the boundaries between the physical and digital realms.

Immersive Technology's Role in Urban Education and Public Art

The integration of technology into architectural education and public art has raised critical imperatives within the scope of this research.[36] While it's evident that technology has transformed both fields,[37] a deeper examination is required to understand these transformations fully. One crucial aspect deserving scrutiny is how technological advancements affect cultural and artistic endeavors, especially in the realm of public art.[38] The emergence of digital technology has not only altered artistic expression but also created new avenues for cultural engagement.[39] This prompts us to investigate the impact of these endeavors on urban social equity.[40] We must analyze how these technological interventions influence access to and participation in public art across diverse urban communities and their implications for democratizing artistic expression.

Another essential inquiry centers on resident engagement in the creative process within public art. The collaborative nature of art production becomes crucial. To what extent can we characterize the production process as collaborative, involving not just artists but also the communities they serve? This collaboration extends beyond the consumption of exhibited content; it includes co-creating art itself.[41] Understanding this

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36 Mehan, Asma. 2023. "Re-narrating Radical Cities Over Time and Through Space: Imagining Urban Activism Through Critical Pedagogical Practices." *Architecture* 3 (1): 92–103.

37 Lu, Yi. 2022. "Teaching Architectural Technology Knowledge Using Virtual Reality Technology." *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 48(4), 1–26. Érudit.

38 Mehan, Asma, and Stuckemeyer, J. 2023b. "Urbanismo en la Era de las Transiciones Radicales: Hacia Paisajes Urbanos Postindustriales." In *Transición Energética y Construcción Social del Territorio ante el Reto del Cambio Climático y el Nuevo Marco Geopolítico*, 145–174. Aranzadi.

39 Jehel, S. et al. (2023) *Introduction: Penser les processus de plateformisation de la culture en direction des jeunes. Revue française des sciences de l'information et de la communication*, (26). [https://journals.openedition.org/rfsic/13895 Accessed: 4 November 2023].

40 Mehan, Asma, and Stuckemeyer, J. 2023a. "Collaborative Pedagogical Practices in the Era of Radical Urban Transitions." *Dimensions. Journal of Architectural Knowledge* 3 (5): 125–142.

41 Mehan, Asma, Odour, N., and Mostafavi, Sina. 2023. "Socio-spatial Micro-networks: Building Community Resilience in Kenya." In *Resilience vs Pandemics: Innovations in Cities and Neighbourhoods*, 141–159. Springer Nature Singapore.

collaboration's dynamics within the context of immersive technology is vital. Moreover, we must comprehend the outcomes of these collaborative discussions and their integration into the overarching project. These discussions between artists, residents, and technology shape the final artistic expressions. We need to explore how these insights, narratives, and ideas become integral components of public art installations. This requires an in-depth analysis of technology's role as a facilitator of dialogue and a medium for capturing the collective voices of the community.[42] In this multifaceted context, public art plays a pivotal role as a nexus where technology, education, and community engagement intersect. When combined with immersive technology, public art transcends its conventional boundaries to become a platform for inclusivity, dialogue, and reshaping urban social equity. It's not merely a medium for artistic expression; it's a transformative force bridging the gap between technology-driven changes and their impact on diverse urban communities. In summary, within this research, the imperatives of collaborative production and the exploration of cultural and artistic endeavors have arisen organically. The interdisciplinary team recognizes the significance of diverse perspectives in shaping urban liminal spaces, aligning with the project's aim of challenging existing norms, and promoting socio-environmental justice. The production process involves interdisciplinary collaboration, extending beyond content consumption. The outcomes of discussions are effectively integrated into the overarching project and disseminated through public exhibitions. Furthermore, while the current research focuses on pedagogical methodologies and involves numerous partners from academia and industry, future iterations will prioritize a resident-centric approach, reflecting the project's commitment to inclusivity and social justice, empowering residents as co-creators of urban spaces.

Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Urban Research: Exploring Socio-Environmental Justice

Situated at the confluence of multiple research disciplines, this project endeavors to architect a holistic understanding of urban contexts by synthesizing varied perspectives. Guided by interdisciplinary collaboration and pedagogical innovation ethos, the project embodies an integrative approach to urban studies. By seamlessly weaving micro-scale materialization practices with macro-scale critical urban studies, the project comprehensively explores urban environments and socio-environmental justice. This expansive collaborative venture involves contributors from Texas Tech University and a host of industry partners globally.

This project's core is the creation and implementation of installation,

42 Brown, A. & Green, T. (2016) *Virtual reality: Low-cost tools and resources for the classroom*. Tec Trends, 60, 517–519. Springer.

which harmonizes three primary domains: computation-based design and fabrication, urban community and spatial justice, and Extended Reality in urban design. This intersection underscores the multifaceted social existence within urban spaces and the vast design potentialities therein. The following sections offer a concise overview of the three subdomains within the project.

1. Computation-based Design and Fabrication

This immersive installation incorporates a broad range of digital design and fabrication technologies, creating a bridge between diverse research disciplines. The innovation lies in the confluence of design computation and fabrication, which mediates between digital representation and physical realization, sparking the exploration of novel spatial possibilities and constructing distinctive urban forms.

The Digital Computation Fabrication studio has engineered computational design workflows and augmented reality (AR)-assisted assembly systems, creating a display structure based on a lattice network shaped by octahedra and tetrahedra honeycomb.[43] A tagging system aids assembly, allowing for easy visualization of the entire structure or by focusing on individual layers or nodes. The intersection of computational design and digital fabrication, especially AR, catalyzes the exploration of interactive and adaptive fabrication processes, thus redefining architectural possibilities.

2. Urban Community and Spatial Justice

The interdisciplinary collaboration within this project, sets its sights on the convergence of urban design, architecture, politics, humanities, and socio-environmental justice in the contrasting urban landscapes of Houston, Texas, and Amsterdam, Netherlands. A primary endeavor is to amplify the importance of socio-environmental justice in urban design by closely examining select urban communities. The focus on spatial justice reiterates the need for equitable access to and use of urban spaces, especially for marginalized communities.

With a commitment to pedagogical collaboration and multidisciplinary approaches, the team ensures that their findings are accessible, thereby promoting dialogue and exploration among audiences. This collaborative educational effort forms a cornerstone of the project, facilitating the dissemination of insights to a broader audience and promoting a more inclusive approach to urban design.

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43 Mostafavi, Sina, Asma Mehan, Cole Howell, Edgar Montejano, and Jessica Stuckemeyer. 2024. “FabriCity-XR: A Phygital Lattice Structure Mapping Spatial Justice–Integrated Design to AR-Enabled Assembly Workflow.” In *112th ACSA Annual Meeting Proceedings, Disruptors on the Edge*, 180-187. Vancouver, Canada: ACSA Press.

Extended Reality in Urban Design Pedagogy

The project features the Extended Reality, an initiative blending user interaction design and digital technologies to construct engaging augmented reality experiences.[44] The concept of Phygital - merging the physical and digital realms - underpins this project, offering users an immersive experience as they traverse both aspects of the project.[45] Features like augmented reality trails, multiple data layers, and analysis ensure a comprehensive, interactive visitor experience. Implementing dynamic QR codes facilitates various augmented reality experiences while capturing critical data on user behavior. This data feeds into an ongoing improvement process, ensuring the relevance and responsiveness of the XR experiences to users' evolving needs. The integration of digital technologies into this model provides a powerful mechanism for fostering active participation and long-term engagement.[46] By weaving play elements into exploring public art and urban landscapes, installation project offers an innovative way of educating users about socio-environmental justice issues and fostering active dialogue within the urban commons.

The project's implementation of digital emerging technologies demonstrates a unique approach to urban exploration and education. One of the key areas of focus is the project's ability to adapt to diverse urban settings and cultural contexts. This adaptability is evident in the way installation tailors augmented reality experiences to reflect the specific socio-environmental characteristics of different cities. For instance, in a city with historical significance, the augmented reality trails might highlight historical events or figures, integrating them with current socio-environmental issues. This approach not only enriches the user experience but also ensures that the content remains relevant and engaging across various urban landscapes. Additionally, the project places a strong emphasis on user feedback. Interactive elements within the interactive experiences are designed to encourage users to share their thoughts and perspectives. This feedback is then used to refine and enhance the digital content, ensuring that it remains dynamic and interactive. For example, users can influence the types of public art featured in the augmented reality trails or suggest new themes for digital interactions. This level of user involvement fosters a sense of community ownership and enhances the project's impact on raising awareness about socio-environmental justice.

Furthermore, in addressing the concerns about inclusiveness and accessibility, the project has taken significant steps to ensure that project is

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44 Delgado, Juan Manuel Davila, Lukumon Oyedele, Peter Demian, and Thomas Beach. "A Research Agenda for Augmented and Virtual Reality in Architecture, Engineering and Construction." *Advanced Engineering Informatics* 45 (2020): 101122. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.aei.2020.101122.

45 Kharvari, Farzam, and Lorenz Ewald Kaiser. "Impact of Extended Reality on Architectural Education and the Design Process." *Automation in Construction* 141 (2022): 104393.

46 Bishop, Claire. *Participation*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.

accessible to a broad range of users. This includes the development of features that cater to different levels of technological proficiency and varying physical abilities. For example, the project includes simplified augmented reality experiences for those who are less familiar with augmented reality technologies, as well as enhanced auditory descriptions for visually impaired users. These inclusive design choices reflect a commitment to making urban exploration and education through interactive installation accessible to all, regardless of their background or abilities. Additionally, the project team actively collaborates with local communities to ensure that the content is culturally sensitive and locally relevant. This collaboration not only enhances the quality of the interactive experiences but also ensures that they resonate with the users on a personal level, thereby deepening their understanding of and engagement with socio-environmental justice issues in their urban environment.

Comparative Case Studies of Socio-Environmental Justice: A Multiscale Approach

The research aims to delve into the complex socio-political dynamics, cultural implications, and contested heritage of marginalized communities in two distinct port cities: Amsterdam, Netherlands, and Houston, United States. Amsterdam, with its rich immigrant history and vibrant cultural fabric, presents unique opportunities to understand how urban design can promote social cohesion and inclusivity. Neighborhoods like Bijlmermeer and Markenplein, with their diverse demographics and distinct environmental challenges, serve as lenses to study broader issues related to immigration, community disengagement, and inclusivity.[47] Houston, on the other hand, confronts important safety and environmental justice challenges.[48] The research seeks to comprehend how urban design can resolve these issues, showcasing the potential of urban design in promoting safety and environmental justice.[49] Within this context, the immersive installation project integrates the research findings into the augmented reality trails that were previously introduced, enabling the audience to actively engage with the research and the mapped socio-environmental challenges of both cities. Recognizing the high immigrant population and socio-cultural diversity in these cities, the study employs a multiscale analysis, i.e., mega, macro, and micro, to comprehensively understand the

47 Marcuse, P. (2017). "Critical urban theory and the right to the city." *City*, 21(3-4), 368-387.

48 Schlosberg, D. (2013). "Theorizing environmental justice: The expanding sphere of a discourse." *Environmental Politics*, 22(1), 37-55.
Schlosberg in this work examines the expanding sphere of environmental justice scholarship and highlights the importance of understanding power relations, social inequalities, and environmental activism in achieving environmental justice.

49 For more see Checker, M. (2005). "Wiped out by the "greenwave": Environmental gentrification and the paradoxical politics of urban sustainability." *City & Society*, 17(2), 255-299.
The author highlights the paradoxical nature of urban sustainability efforts that can inadvertently displace marginalized communities through processes of gentrification, calling for a more nuanced understanding of the social and environmental dimensions of urban development.

urban conditions and suggest well-informed interventions.[50]

Through the comparative perspective, the intricate role of public art in Bijlmermeer and Markenplein is analyzed with a scholarly lens. Bijlmermeer's public art emerges as a pivotal element in community empowerment and environmental advocacy.[51] This demonstrates how art not only reflects cultural identity but also galvanizes environmental awareness and solidarity. Contrastingly, in Markenplein, the integration of public art within urban renewal projects[52], signifies a strategic approach to socio-environmental rejuvenation.[53] The concept of 'artistic urbanism' further elucidates how public art in Markenplein transcends aesthetic dimensions, contributing to sustainable urban development.[54] These case studies collectively shed light on the transformative power of public art in urban environments, highlighting its integral role in fostering socio-environmental narratives and justice, thus enriching the academic discourse on the intersection of art, urban development, and environmental sustainability.

At the mega-scale, the study scrutinizes the overarching trends and patterns within broader city areas, referred to as boroughs in Amsterdam and counties in Houston. This analysis covers these regions' environmental, social, and demographic aspects to gain a broader context of the urban environment.[55] On a more detailed level, the macro-scale analysis highlights specific neighborhoods within two cities.

In Houston, the research focuses on 'Galena Park' is a neighborhood grappling with significant safety and environmental challenges. The study aims to comprehend how urban design can resolve these issues, particularly focusing on environmental justice.[56] Galena Park's high densities of commercial and industrial spaces have severe health and societal impacts on the residents. To address these concerns, a community air monitoring initiative was started, including a community health impact

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50 Bulkeley, H., & Betsill, M. M. (2005). "Rethinking sustainable cities: Multilevel governance and the 'urban' politics of climate change." *Environmental Politics*, 14(1), 42-63.

51 Saulė Petronienė & Saulutė Juzelėnienė. (2022) "Community Engagement via Mural Art to Foster a Sustainable Urban Environment." *Sustainability* 14:16, pages 10063.

52 Cheng, Yue, Jiayin Chen, Jiahua Li, Lin Li, Guanhua Hou, and Xuan Xiao. 2023. "Research on the Preference of Public Art Design in Urban Landscapes: Evidence from an Event-Related Potential Study" *Land* 12, no. 10: 1883.

53 Mehan, Asma, and Casey, Z. S. 2023. "Blue Infrastructures: An Exploration of Oceanic Networks and Urban–Industrial–Energy Interactions in the Gulf of Mexico." *Sustainability* 15 (18): 13699.

54 Lavanga, M., Drosner, M. (2020). "Towards a New Paradigm of the Creative City or the Same Devil in Disguise? Culture-led Urban (Re)development and Sustainability." In: Oakley, K., Banks, M. (eds) *Cultural Industries and the Environmental Crisis*. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49384-4_8

55 Bulkeley, H., & Betsill, M. M. (2005). "Rethinking sustainable cities: Multilevel governance and the 'urban' politics of climate change." *Environmental Politics*, 14(1), 42-63.

56 Mehan, Asma, and Maurice Jansen. "Beirut Blast: A Port City in Crisis." The Port City Futures Blog. Leiden.Delft.Erasmus (LDE) Initiative, August 2020. https://philpapers.org/rec/MEHBBA-2

study and activities related to mapping and air monitoring.[57] Additionally, the research explores the issues of safety and crime in Houston, highlighting the importance of creating safe spaces within community design and considering existing social conditions. The proposed design for 'Buffalo Bayou' aims to create a transitional space between high-crime and low-crime areas. The bridge design utilizes pathways intersecting over the threshold of water, fostering community engagement, and creating a closer and safer community. The design considers the diverse ethnicities within the area, providing spaces for multiple activities and social connections.[58]

In Amsterdam, the research centers on 'Bijlmermeer', a neighborhood that emerged as a refuge for Surinamese people during the revolution, becoming a multicultural melting pot with over 100 nationalities. [59] The area faces environmental challenges such as high heat islands, flood risk, and air pollution resulting from a plane crash in 1992.[60] The research seeks to propose further development in the 'Bijlmermeer' parcel, aiming to improve the quality of life for residents through urban renewal and residential engagement. The design incorporates the water that surrounds the region to create a threshold within the existing infrastructure, with the proposal featuring a water monument commemorating the plane crash.[61] The remaining site is envisioned for community interaction and future development.[62] This examination allows for a detailed understanding of these communities' unique challenges and conditions, offering critical insights that feed into targeted intervention strategies.[63]

Amsterdam's 'Markenplein' Neighborhood, surrounded by canal systems, presents an opportunity to create an arts district that connects

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57 See Fraser, James C., and Colin Howard. "Environmental justice as process: Discursive strategies in contested urban landscapes." *Geoforum* 86 (2017): 115-126. This study critically investigates the phenomenon of environmental gentrification, where the introduction of environmental amenities leads to displacement and inequality in urban neighborhoods.

58 See Boom, Erik. "Urban resilience in Houston and Amsterdam: A comparative analysis of flood management approaches." *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* 60, no. 9 (2017): 1544-1561.
Boom in this research compares the approaches to flood management and urban resilience in Houston and Amsterdam. It examines the strategies and policies implemented in both cities to address flood risks and analyzes their effectiveness in promoting environmental justice and resilience.

59 Nell, Liza, and Jan Rath, eds. *Ethnic Amsterdam: Immigrants and Urban Change in the Twentieth Century*. Amsterdam University Press, 2009.

60 Heilbron, Miguel. "Not for Surinamese: How Amsterdam closed entire neighborhoods to non-white Dutch people." *e-flux online Journa*l, 22. Accessed [22 May 2023]. URL: https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/where-is-here/466510/not-for-surinamese-how-amsterdam-closed-entire-neighborhoods-to-non-white-dutch-people/

61 It is important to analyze the role of power relations in shaping water governance and the implications for socio-environmental justice.
For more reading see: Swyngedouw, Erik. "Social power and the urbanization of water: Flows of power." In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Environmental Science*, 2004.

62 Boodaghi, Omid, Zohreh Fanni, and Asma Mehan. "Regulation and policymaking for urban cultural heritage preservation: A comparison between Iran and Italy." *Journal of Cultural Heritage Management and Sustainable Development* (2022).

63 See Holifield, Ryan, Jayajit Chakraborty, and Gordon Walker, eds. *The Routledge Handbook of Environmental Justice*. Routledge, 2018.

and displays various aspects following Anne Frank's life. The proposal addresses social aspects such as immigration, community disengagement, and lack of walkable areas. The design includes a semi-open bridge and public gathering areas to promote connectivity and engage visitors in the rich cultural heritage of Amsterdam. Furthermore, the research proposes urban regeneration strategies on the micro-scale to foster community cohesion, facilitate integration politics, and encourage cultural exchange. These initiatives aspire to improve residents' quality of life, address their unique needs and aspirations, and cultivate a more equitable and inclusive urban environment (See Figure 1).[64]

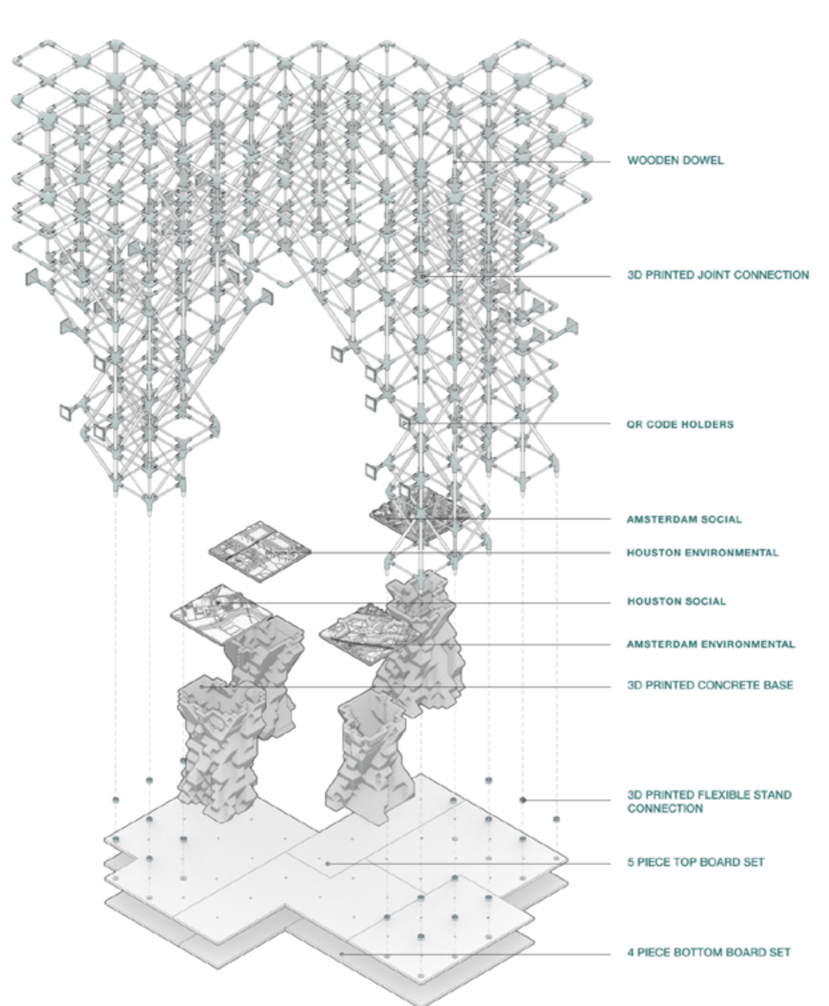

FIG. 1 Final Installation. Source: TTU HCOA Joint Studios (UCD+DFC) Led by Authors

In the context of this comparative project, an innovative framework is taken to understand and address the complexities of urban environments.[65] One

64 Following Soja's perspective, this research critically analyzes the spatial injustice inherent in urban development.
For more reading See Soja, E. W. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice*. University of Minnesota Press

65 Mehan, Asma, and Abdul Razak, R. 2022. "Oil Heritage in Iran and Malaysia: The Future Energy Legacy in the Persian Gulf and the South China Sea." In *New Metropolitan Perspectives. NMP 2022* (Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems), vol. 482, edited by F. Calabrò, L. Della Spina, and M. J. Piñeira Mantiñán. Springer.

significant aspect of this research is the adoption of interactive technologies as a tool for visualizing and interpreting the intricate dynamics of urban spaces. Through this installation, users are immersed in a virtual cityscape, allowing them to explore and engage with the built environment of Houston and Amsterdam. This interactive experience enables a deep understanding of the relationships between public art, urban spaces, and socio-environmental justice.[66]

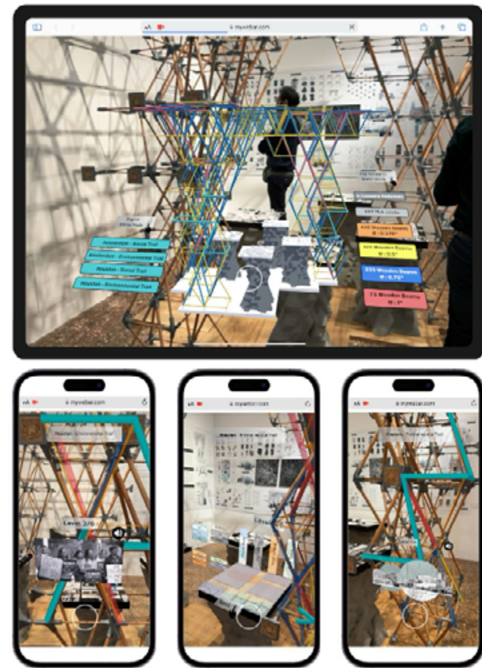

FIG. 2 Samples of Screenshot from AR trails integrated to the installation. Source: TTU HCOA Joint Studios (UCD+DFC) Led by Authors

Moreover, integrating interactive technologies in pedagogical architectural research creates an experiential learning environment beyond traditional classroom settings. It enables students and researchers to gain insights into the nuanced architectural design nuances and their socio-political implications. By incorporating the emerging technologies, this research enhances participatory design processes, promoting a more inclusive approach to producing urban spaces **(See Fig. 1 & 2)**. By fostering interdisciplinary dialogue among students and researchers, this project contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the complexities inherent in urban environments.[67] The comparative analysis between Houston and Amsterdam offers valuable insights into urban regeneration strategies and their implications for socio-environmental justice. Ultimately, this research project adds to the broader discourse surrounding the pursuit of equitable and sustainable urban design practices.[68]

Concluding Notes

The installation project marks a significant stride towards a more participatory and inclusive approach to urban design and public art. By leveraging digital technologies and championing the principles of socio-environmental justice, it reimagines the tectonics of liminal spaces within metropolitan cities. As cities evolve, it is imperative to actively challenge the existing power structures and societal norms that shape our urban environments. Through such disruptive endeavors, we hope to create cities

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66 Pulido, Laura. "Environmental Racism." 1–13. Accessed May 21, 2023. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786352.wbieg0453; See also Pellow, D. N. (2000). *Environmental racism: A challenge to the environmental justice movement. Resources for the Future.*
Examining the intersection of environmental issues and social justice, Pellow highlights the concept of environmental racism. The author critically analyzes the disproportionate environmental burdens borne by marginalized communities and challenges the mainstream environmental justice movement to address issues of race and power. This is an interesting point of view that we implemented when exploring the environmental racism in Houston.

67 Harvey, D. (2009). *Social justice and the city*. University of Georgia Press.
This influential book by David Harvey explores the relationship between social justice and the urban environment. Harvey critically analyzes urban processes, inequalities, and power structures, highlighting the importance of addressing social justice concerns in urban design, spatial planning, and development.

68 DeVerteuil, G. "Poverty, homelessness and urban governance: Street populations and the urban management of poverty." *Progress in Human Geography* 35, no. 6 (2011): 840-853.

that reflect their diverse inhabitants and aspirations, providing a platform for transformative socio-environmental change. Moreover, by grounding this research in the context of two European and American metropolitan cities—Houston and Amsterdam—this interactive installation provides an insightful comparison and contrast of urban dynamics, thus broadening the discourse on urbanism, public art, and social justice. This project, therefore, serves as both a critical study and a compelling manifesto, advocating for the co-production of urban space, the integration of new technologies in architectural research, and the pursuit of spatial justice in the urban context.

The project highlights the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration and pedagogical innovation in achieving this goal. By adopting Augmented Reality to visualize and interpret the complex dynamics of urban environments, the project deepens our understanding of architectural design nuances and their socio-political implications. Furthermore, it enhances participatory design processes, encouraging a more inclusive approach to urban space production.

The comparative case studies of Houston and Amsterdam provide nuanced perspectives on urban regeneration strategies. Through the multiscale approach, encompassing mega, macro, and microanalyses, the project comprehensively examines the intricacies of marginalized communities' socio-political dynamics, cultural implications, and contested heritage. By addressing environmental challenges and social issues these communities face, the project aims to suggest well-informed interventions and foster community cohesion, integration politics, and cultural exchange.

The interactive installation not only advances our understanding of urban dynamics but actively contributes to urban social justice. By engaging diverse communities through public art and immersive technology, it transcends academic boundaries to influence positive change. Its transformative potential empowers residents, challenges norms, and advocates for inclusive and equitable urban futures. Through co-producing liminal spaces, integrating new technologies, and examining socio-environmental justice, this project sets a precedent for research translating into meaningful impact, fostering just and vibrant urban environments.

In conclusion, the installation project exemplifies the transformative potential of interdisciplinary research, digital technologies, and comparative case studies in advancing socio-environmental justice in urban design. It highlights the importance of inclusive and participatory approaches to urban space production, aiming to create cities that reflect the diverse needs and aspirations of their inhabitants. This research underscores the transformative potential of technology as a critical driver in reshaping the landscape of arts, culture, pedagogy, urban research, and activism. It draws attention to the innovative ways technology has revolutionized

the production, distribution, and interaction with art and design works and transformed teaching methods, urban research methodologies, and strategies for social activism. It invites a critical evaluation of these advancements, urging a comprehensive understanding of their broader implications for art, culture, education, urban studies, and activism. The project contributes to the broader discourse on urbanism, public art, and social justice through its insights, inspiring critical reflections, and action towards a more equitable and inclusive future.

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Photo courtest by Michele Liparesi

PRACTICES

Counter-Non-Anti-Remembrance. The Anti-monumental Practices by TIST Collective

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ABSTRACT
In the recent decades, monumentality has been significantly reconsidered with its symbolic materiality and agency in public spaces. *Counter-*, *non-*, and *anti-*monumental practices have emerged on the scene of contemporary art as a new, critical mode of commemorative and social ritual. While addressing the well-known query on whether monumentality can still be considered a valid tool able to synthesize and keep the collective memory, the current paper investigates the remembrance practices by TIST collective (Italy). In the last two years TIST implemented a series of artistic actions in the urban space designed to address the emergence and endurance of a commemorative community and the possibility of remembrance as a public ritual.

KEYWORDS
Monumentality; Remembrance; Public space; Collectivity; Urban rituals

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In the poem of 1833, *The Bronze Horseman*, Alexander Pushkin described how the equestrian monument to Peter the Great came to life and chased a young man Evgenii to death for having dared the statue (and the state power it represents) by blaming it for the flood that had taken the life of his fiancée.[1] Two centuries earlier, Molière had transformed a statue–of the Commander–into the weapon of retaliation for Don Juan's despicable behavior and, above all, for having challenged and provoked the commemorative sculpture, alias the supreme power.[2] For centuries, monuments have been designed to keep a collective memory of a subject worth enduring in time by claiming some absolute value beyond the moment's social, political, or cultural conditions. The phenomenon of *statuomania* is related to the consolidation of national states between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the historical process urban realities still have to face.[3] Due to world conflicts and the revision in urban planning and architectural sociability, monumentality has been significantly reconsidered with its symbolic materiality and agency in public spaces.

The very nature of a memorial as a provider for one version of a story renders the memory of its creators vulnerable and open to contestation. By glorifying one narrative, a monument wipes out all others. While celebrating a virtue, its symbolic pathos implies a condemnation of sin. The special intangible might that a monument claims to embody has turned into its Achilles' heel. At the end of World War II, all Nazi symbols were destroyed by order of the occupation authorities. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the massive removal of Soviet memorials has since been an increasing trend in Eastern Europe. The physical demolition of their statues underlined the defeat of Saddam Hussein in 2003 and Gaddafi in 2011. Over a hundred Confederate monuments have been removed in the last decade after protests guided by African American and civil rights activist associations.

On the one hand, contemporary revisionist tendencies (both progressive and conservative) re-examine historical facts, leaving little space for an affirmative message. On the other hand, while giving voice to the communities that have been oppressed and deprived of the right to (self) representation, identity politics questions the possibility of elaborating a common message. Memorials, sharing the public space of daily life and thus insisting on being rooted in the present, are often denied the same peaceful historicization and museumification guaranteed to the works of art. Their aesthetic qualities are subservient to the symbolic pathos they represent. Even if considered obsolete or drained out of meaning, monumental symbols firmly tie victors to victims, ready to reveal their explosive

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1 Alexander Pushkin, "The Bronze Horseman," in *The Bronze Horseman: Selected Poems of Alexander Pushkin*, ed. D. M. Thomas (New York: Viking Pr., 1982).

2 Molière, *Don Juan* (New York: Ecco, 2001).

3 Sergiusz Michalski, *Public monuments: Art in political bondage 1870–1997* (New York: Reaktion Book, 1998).

potential at any moment.[4] In light of these facts, we would like to address the following query: is monumentality still a valid tool able to synthesize and keep the collective memory in the public space?

In recent decades, *counter-*, *non-*, and *anti-*monumental practices have emerged on the scene of contemporary art as a new, critical mode of commemorative and social ritual.[5] Among the prominent examples of this tendency, there are the *Monument Against Fascism* (1986) and the *2146 Stones – Monument Against Racism* (1990-93) by Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz, the *Bataille* (2002), *Gramsci* (2013) and *Deleuze* (2021) *Monuments* by Thomas Hirschhorn, *Legarsi alla montagna/Sich an den Berg binden* (1981) by Marina Lai, the *Nike Ground* (2003) by Eva and Franco Mattes, the series *Momentary Monuments* (s. 2009) by Lara Favaretto. While a traditional monument glorifies a person or an event suggesting permanence and persistence in forms and materials implied, the anti-monumental works reflect a polyphony of voices assuming a fragile, temporal appearance. The monument has a prominent position separated from or towering over the space of the everyday; on the contrary, the anti-monuments are weather movable or camouflaged in urban fabric. The monument demands from the public just one sense–the sight–and is designed to be viewed from a distance with solemnity and deference; the anti-monument invites close, physical encounters, urging viewers to become users through participation.[6] The mentioned characteristics of the counter-monumental practices reflect the so-called collective, participatory, social turn present in contemporary art since the second half of the twentieth century.

Since the 1990s, digital multimedia technologies have expanded to such an extent as to generate a domestication of the virtual, which is increasingly widespread in the analog space of action.[7] Augmented reality, or AR, has become a new tool to re-think the conception of the human habitat and its cultural heritage. The new generation of artists and activists master the space on the intersection of the virtual and the concrete and implement new rituals of remembrance. Among many others, this is the case of the interventions by the collective Manifest. AR during the Occupy Movement (2011), the app *Actual RealityOS* (2019) by Hito Steyerl, *La statua che non c'è* (2020) by Cantiere in Milan, and the Monuments Project

4 Chto Delat, "Editorial," *Face to Face With the Monument. Chto Delat Newspaper*, no.37 (2014): 2.

5 James F. Osborne, "Counter-monumentality and the Vulnerability of Memory," *Journal of Social Archaeology*, no. 17(2) (2017): 163–187.

6 Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, Ruth Fazakerley, "Counter-monuments: the Anti-monumental and the Dialogic," *The Journal of Architecture*, 17:6 (December 2012):951-972.

7 Lev Manovich, "The Poetics of the Augmented Space," *Visual Communication*, no. 5(2) (2006): 219–240.

(2021) by Movers and Shakers.[8] The irruption of the virtual into the concrete environment has a constructive effect since it contributes to reflecting on our behavior and interactions in the cityscape.

However, one more aspect makes traditional monumentality look odd nowadays: the impossibility of commemoration itself, or better, the infeasibility of a lasting commemoration. The historian Jay Winter indicates that the primary condition for a memorial is not the object in charge of this function but the existence of a commemorative community.[9] A place, a gadget, or a ritual becomes celebratory when the intention behind it is accepted by the audience that encounters the object in its habitat, uses it, or engages in a specific observance.[10] In order to transform memory into a memorial, we need a community that shares a common point of view on what needs to be remembered. The artistic practices we will examine further address precisely the point of our interest: the emergence and endurance of a commemorative community and the possibility of remembrance as a public ritual.

TIST collective was founded in 2020 in Bologna by Michele Liparesi and Yulia S. Tikhomirova to address the consequences of managing the pandemic, particularly harmful to the independent art scene.[11] The artists, joined later by Samir Sayed Abdellattef and Enrico Vassallo, renounced to transfer their practices online and reunited to reflect on the new directions to develop, starting from the principle of non-competition and care. The anti-monumental operation was one of these new directions approached by TIST in two complementary but opposing manners: the destruction of an object-monument through collective use and the construction of a *lieu de mémoire* through collective commitment.

The first artistic device used by TIST for the anti-monumental practice was implemented by Michele Liparesi in 2016 in Florence. At times, still a student from the sculpture department of Fine Arts Academy, Liparesi observed the complete conversion of the city into an open-air museum at the service of tourists. As the artist claimed:

> For young artists, there was simply no physical space left to use for any kind of activity in the urban space. The city was overwhelmed by monuments cordoned off, guarded, and prohibited from touching or using in any way. At the same time, the rent prices were growing dizzyingly, forcing students to move out to the periphery or to leave.[12]

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8 Roberto Paolo Malaspina, Sofia Pirandello, "Memoria interattiva. Contro-monumenti in realtà aumentata," *Roots-Routes. Research on Visual Cultures*, no. 35 (January–April 2021), https://www.roots-routes.org/ memoria-interattiva-contro-monumenti-in-realta-aumentata-di-roberto-paolo-malaspina-e-sofia-pirandello/ Accessed June 16, 2023.

9 Jay Winter, "Sites of Memory and the Shadow of War," in *Cultural Memory Studies*, ed. Astrid Erll, Ansgar Nünning (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2010), 61-77.

10 Mischa Gabowitsch, "Soviet War Memorials: a Few Biographical Remarks," *Face to Face with the Monument. Chto Delat Newspaper*, no.37 (2014): 6–8.

11 TIST collective website, https://tistcollective.org/ Accessed June 16, 2023.

12 Conversation with Michele Liparesi, archive of Yulia S. Tikhomirova, January 12, 2023.

This emergency gave rise to the *A Living Unit* project. Liparesi constructed a device that looked like a typical eighteenth-century statue on a vigorously decorated pedestal, perfect for camouflaging in the decorum of any Florence square. The sculpture represented the artist himself, dressed according to the fashion of past centuries, looking from up to down at the passers-by.

FIG. 1 Michele Liparesi, A Living Unit, 2017. Bologna. Courtesy of the artist.

Nonetheless, it was the pedestal to be the central part of the operation: the 2- meters-high and 1-meter-wide booth appeared to be a *classic* basement embellished with plaster moldings. By approaching it, however, the viewer realized that the whole ensemble was made of recycled wood and reused utensils and could be, at best, considered a prototype for an actual monument yet to come. Moreover, the object was on wheels, so the artist could effortlessly push it around the streets despite its imposing size. The plaster decorations, in turn, represented genre scenes and inscriptions that gave precise instructions: all four sides of the monument were to open and utilize deconstructing, thus, the whole complex. Once dismantled, the (anti)monumental structure offered a functional kitchen, a table with footstools, a desk with an armchair, bookshelves, and a bed–a complete *living unit* for a student or a citizen who had faced the housing crisis.

In 2021, after the lockdown was eased, TIST's members employed A *Living Unit* to address a new emergency: the fear of physicality and the long-lasting consequences this fear produced on the social relationships between people in the urban context. Liparesi's prototype was freed from the sculpture on top, and the artists have focused on the further function of the device: to catalyze social encounters in the public space. The collective would push the *A Living Unit* around peripheral streets and make occasional stops offering coffee and wine to the passers-by. Based in the industrial outskirts of Bologna, in Rastignano, the collective was aware that the periphery residents would be the last category to return to

FIG. 2 Michele Liparesi, *A Living Unit*, 2017. Bologna. Courtesy of the artist.

everyday sociability after the lockdown, having already been deprived of social and cultural infrastructure even before the pandemic. Furthermore, the remoteness of marginal zones made it easier to transform an artistic gesture into a social participatory practice. Far from tourist sights, these areas were inhabited by residents who crossed the same streets and faced similar problems.

FIG. 3 TIST, *A Living Unit*, 2021. Videostill. Rastignano. Courtesy of the artists.

A *Living Unit* acted as an attraction or a pretext for physical encounters and dialogue, fulfilling the function of a missing social catalyst and bringing people together. Considering our paper's main query, we affirm that the artistic device boosted the emergence of a temporary community, even if still not commemorative. In order to become the latter, a significant event that could influence the lives of the most, binding them to the same recollection, was necessary. As we write this article, in June 2023, the Rastignano's inhabitants are living through the aftermath of the recent

flood the Emilia Romagna region faced at the end of May. The cataclysm destroyed river embankments, roads and interrupted circulation in the zone, affecting everyday life. It is still early to assert the emergence of the recurrent remembrance practice related to this event; however, TIST's members have already witnessed how the newly emerged community gets together to address the city council and demand responsibility for the mismanagement that caused such heavy consequences.

In 2022, TIST was invited to exhibit in the Public Space Museum of Bologna in the framework of the Urban Therapy Festival. Together with the *A Living Unit*, TIST has exposed a conceptual prospect on the possible outcomes of the anti-monumental projects. *The Possible Future Anti-Monument Units* map had a futuristic impetus inspired partially by Archigram, an avant-garde British architectural group, and partially by the same post-pandemic social unease we mentioned above. Such units as *Let's Play*, *Stellarium for Two*, or *A Booth for a Forced Dialogue* indulged in ironic and provocative forms rather than projected solutions to realize concretely.

FIG. 4 TIST, *Possible Future Anti-Monument Units*, 2022. Public Space Museum, Bologna. Courtesy of the artists.

At the end of the exhibition, which lasted one month, the Museum's direction organized a street performance inviting TIST collective to repeat Rastignano's experience and to bring the *A Living Unit* outside in the neighborhood. Although the event was successful in terms of audience and media coverage, we cannot but underline that the very contest of the contemporary art milieu undermined the work's concept. On the one hand, the art public perceived the anti-monument as a product of pure creativity, an art object free from any concrete emergency. On the other hand, even if curious, the local residents did not have enough time to engage with the project: a single event was insufficient for them to approach the device, let alone build connections. This experience proved to TIST's members

that “the Booth cannot exist but down the street. The places of art exhibit purely the shell while all the meaning is totally gone.”[13]

FIG. 5 TIST, *A Living Unit*, 2022. Bologna. Courtesy of the artists.

Even if the *Possible Future Anti-Monument Units* were not thought up to be fabricated, one of them, the *Sound Booth*, turned out to be a fruitful idea for the teenagers of the small town near Vienna–Hollabrunn, where TIST’s members spent time in residency organized by the local curatorial team AIRInSilo, in March 2022. The artists were positively intrigued by the number of schools Hollabrunn offered and the flow of young people who passed through the town daily from neighboring communities. TIST found this situation particularly stimulating to work on and proposed a social anti-monument for the younger generation who suffered from the lack of cultural and leisure facilities. The *Sound Booth* has become the *SoundInSilo Anti-monument for Hollabrunn*, which is still ongoing work, currently at the planning stage. It visually recalls the early twentieth-century

FIG. 6 TIST, *SoundInSilo Anti-monument for Hollabrunn*, 2022. Render. Courtesy of the artists.

13 Ref.: Conversation with TIST’s members, archive of Yulia S. Tikhomirova, May 31, 2023.

shed construction. Its design is inspired by the particular architecture of two silo storages one sees arriving at the town's train station. The appearance fits the place from the urbanistic point of view while taking advantage of the *triviality* of its look that accentuates the surprise effect once the booth is opened.

The anti-monument will offer tables and seats and will be supplied with integrated sound speakers with a plug-in or Bluetooth system to facilitate connection to one's phone. It will encourage the public sharing of music, radio, or audiobooks. SoundInSilo has a sliding roof to keep the sound located not to disturb the neighborhood and protect the listeners from sun or rain. For this project, TIST aims to involve the local community directly in the research, planning, and production activity. The artists intend to engage the students of the Hollabrunner Technik Leistungszentrums, one of the town's leading technical high schools, in all phases of the work and cooperate with the local student radio station RadioYpsilon in communication plan and cultural program. This strategy aims to stimulate direct commitment and participation rather than simple curiosity. Besides the clear social function, which is to provide the younger people with a cultural facility that they will have to self-manage together, the idea is to leave the

FIG. 7 TIST, *Anti-fascist Anti-monument. Temporary But Resistant*, 2022. Bologna. Courtesy of the artists.

meaning of this operation as open as possible and to let it grow naturally through usage.

Another example of the anti-monumental practice by TIST has to do with the opposite process–the construction of a *lieu de mémoire* through collective commitment. According to the French historian Pierre Nora, places of memory are not necessarily restricted to specific locations. Everything that generates a symbolic meaning to which a given social

ANTI-MONUMENTO RESISTENTE

Il gioco dei 100 mattoni anti-fascista
per costruire una identità politica collettiva

tist

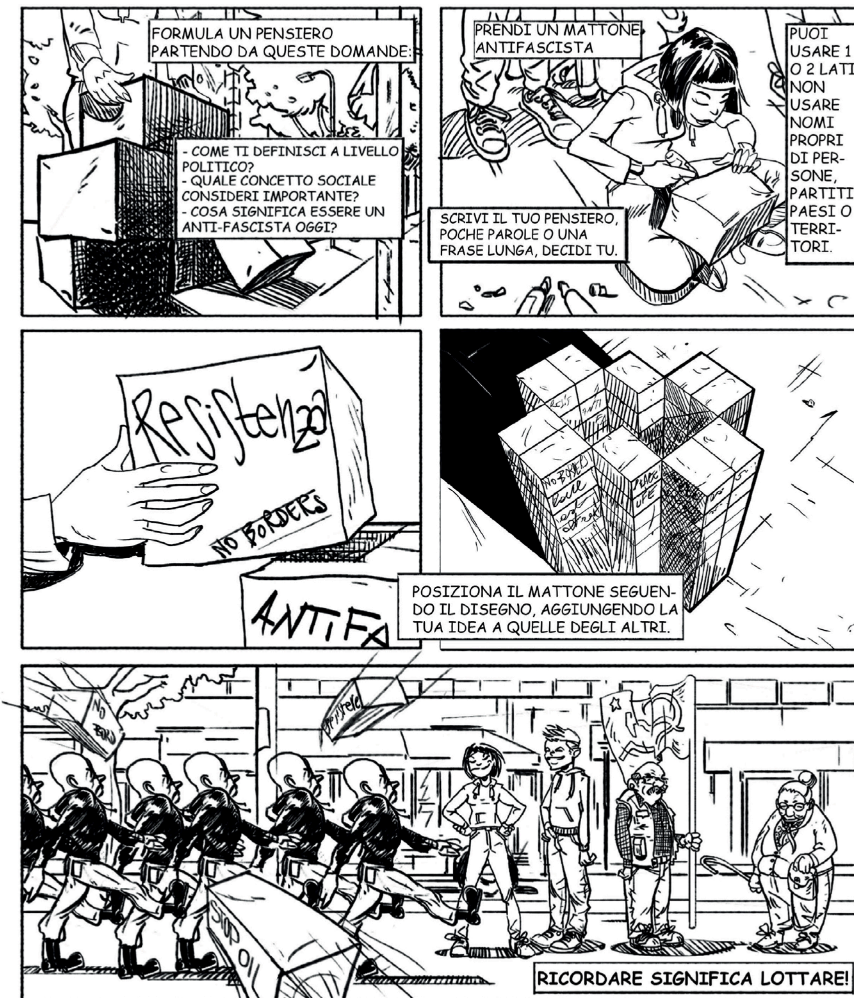

FIG. 8 TIST, *Anti-fascist Anti-monument. Temporary But Resistant*, 2022. Flyer. Bologna. Courtesy of the artists.

group can relate be it a place, object, or period, can be called a place of memory.[14] The onset for such a procedure starts with identifying a community that already shares common values and spaces and offering it an idea that can structure a collective remembrance ritual. The *Anti-fascist Anti-monument. Temporary But Resistant* project was implemented in November 2022 in the framework of the street festival *Oltre Il Ponte (Beyond the Bridge)*, dedicated to the anti-fascist resistance and the memory of the partisan battle that took place in 1944 in the Bolognina district of Bologna. The celebration of the Battle of the Bolognina coincided with a completely different kind of anniversary—the centenary of the march on Rome of the fascist militias, which ended with the takeover of power by Benito Mussolini. Thus, TIST's members decided to address an urgent

14 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations, Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory*, no. 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

query–the significance of anti-fascism in the current circumstances–by letting citizens formulate their own social positions and elaborate a collective political identity.

The operation occurred on a busy street near the festival's location and lasted one day, from early morning to late night. Here again, the artists had prepared art devices in advance and had conceived some initial rules that would catalyze a process, the result of which was left open.

FIG. 9 TIST, *Anti-fascist Anti-monument. Temporary But Resistant*, 2022. Bologna. Courtesy of the artists.

The passers-by were offered hundred cement-like cardboard blocks to write their reflections on. The blocks symbolized the bricks to be thrown at the infamous march. After writing a political message, the participants were invited to position the blocks one onto another to construct a new *Temporary But Resistant monument*.

This action had a playful character: the instructions were presented as a comix, and the written phrases looked like scribbles people leave spontaneously on the city walls. While personalizing one's block, the inhabitants

engaged in passionate discussions with each other on their political positions and on how efficient resistance to reactionary politics could be achieved. Moreover, the citizens established dialogues and polemics through written interventions by adding their thoughts to those already left by the others or by using arrows and visual connections directly on the walls of the anti-monument. In this case, the artists provided initial tools while leaving the process to the residents, who actively constructed the anti-fascist memorial they felt was lacking in the neighborhood.

In conclusion, we will delineate the primary theoretical reflections behind the anti-monumental operation by TIST collective and make a synthetic comparison with the main features inherent in the traditional monumental practice, as traced by the scholars Quentin Stevens, Karen A. Franck, Ruth Fazakerley.[15] The first point to address here is the Subject. As mentioned above, a traditional monument is always dedicated to the only subject, be it a single personality, an event, or an abstract idea expressed in an affirmative tone. The anti-monuments by TIST are free from any pre-fabricated sense. They offer an idea of possible usage but do not directly indicate the sense behind the handling. Inhabitants create meaning by using the device and living it through. It is a stage for minimal actions, which can be comprehended through bodily interchanges in connection with others and the urban space.

The second point refers to Form and Materials. A traditional monument needs an easily decipherable form in convention with a general taste of the specific time and place. The form should transmit power and sufficiency over the down-to-earth existence. The materials should be persistent and durable. The anti-monument, in turn, mimics familiar forms, taking inspiration from local architectural clichés and typical industrial structures. Once approached, it reveals its temporary nature and a prototype-like look. The materials are recycled and not meant to last.

The third matter is linked to Site and Location. The site for a monument is an essential part of its significance and power. Traditional monuments are often prominent, set apart from everyday space, once and forever. Their elevation and immobility guarantee the correctness and eternity of their message. The anti-monuments are on wheels. They can be easily pushed around the city. They do not belong to a specific place or community. Their provisional nature is permanent. They oppose their nomadism to the correctness of immobility.

The last issue concerns the notion of Visitor, Spectator, and User. The monuments demand from us just one sense–the sight. Most are designed to be viewed from a distance and down to up and pretend to put the spectator in awe. The anti-monument invites close, bodily encounters, transforming a visitor into a user, excluding the possibility of being a spectator,

15 Stevens, Franck and Fazakerley, "Counter-monuments."

as soon as there is no discrete object for private introspection or an artist to perform a spectacle. The anti-monument can be activated only through physical relations and social care. The emotional affinity of its users with each other is the final aim of TIST's practices.

Ultimately, we want to underline that the anti-monument project by TIST collective is a series of acts of appropriation of the public space that, for two decades, has been in drastic diminution in Italy due to the extractivist cultural politics that sees urban spaces merely as a source for investment and profit. TIST aims to renounce the celebratory aesthetics of commemoration and embellishment and to explore the humble position of a pedestal with the ultimate idea of activating social ties free from the monetary exchange or cultural policy dropped from above. While addressing the query of monumentality, TIST ascribes a temporary and open nature to the collective memory and attempts to rewrite forms, values, and experiences to trigger direct and unmediated dynamics in urban living. In the public space of our cities, remembrance is possible if it takes the form of a shared process and involves local agents rather than being consecrated to a monumental object.

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PRACTICES

A Sense of Place Through Land Art

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ABSTRACT
This article explores and analyses the possibilities of using Land art as a performative tool for place-making and giving ownership of space, based on the idea that personal meaning and emotional bonds with place can evolve after brief exposure to a space through performative and creative performances. Further, land art as a performance could also support the individual to create awareness of experiences in place and restoration. We are inspired by the Land art movement that emerged in the 1960s, specifically inspired by Europeans' ephemeral interventions in-and-within the landscape, returnable, with natural materials. In order to explore such possibilities, we focus on land art as a possibility to be used in natural public spaces. These reflections come from teachers and students, all authors of this article, deriving from a project of land art as a part of an international distance master course in environmental psychology, repeated for 3 years. We explore how the creative process of doing a land art project with natural materials from a basic experiential perception of the art-processes unfolds within a public space in different parts of the world, exploring aspects that facilitate or impede such potentials of place creation and awareness of place. Reflections on experiences of creating land art projects are presented exploring the basic perception of inner processes connected to place that are cognitive, somatic and embodied, moving towards a deeper relationship with place, touching upon place meaning, identity and attachment. The findings highlight the potential of individual land art experiences as means of engaging with and reimagining public spaces, raising questions about the rights to the city and the public space, and highlighting the awareness that a land art project that is ephemeral and natural has an intrinsic value for its users and how this could be beneficial for the individual experiences and wellbeing.

KEYWORDS
Place; Place making; Sense of place; Ownership of place; Urban health; Land art

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Introduction

Recent reviews on city planning and design have criticized the urban discourse for focusing on the provisions of public spaces that fail to support the inclusiveness of citizens' perspectives in the public realm,[1] a human right in goal 11 of the 2030 agenda by the United Nations.[2] A call for greater inclusiveness is supported by current research and planning discussions in people-environment fields which propose a greater focus on place ownership and the appropriation of public spaces through co-creation.[3] People can be aware or unaware of the influence that places have on their well-being and feelings of inclusiveness.[4] Similarly, people can be unaware of the powerful possibility of being influential within those places[5].

In particular, the work of Jekaterina Lavrinec[6] in participatory urban research has called attention to a variety of ways in which places are not a mere backdrop or physical display, but instead are dynamic settings of meanings and movements of its users, based on contacts that can be either passive or active in these urban settings. She argues that by understanding this interplay of both the bodily and emotional aspects of place, we could create more engaging, socially vibrant cities. An opportunity for this interplay is the promotion of newer scenographies in our everyday places with playful, artistic opportunities, which could, in turn, have the potentials to increase the inclusiveness in the public realms.

Environmental psychology is a field with documented potential to disentangle the transactional relationship between people and places. The field has long been fascinated with the various structural layers of the concept of place and its many theorizations, and conceptualizations[7]. For environmental psychologists, the study of place experience provides a central opportunity to explore the co-constitutions of identity(ies),

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1 Eg: Alessandro Aurigi and Nancy Odendaal, "From "Smart in the Box" to "Smart in the City": Rethinking the Socially Sustainable Smart City in Context," *Journal of Urban Technology* 28, no. 1-2 (2021); Danni Liang et al., "Mapping Key Features and Dimensions of the Inclusive City: A Systematic Bibliometric Analysis and Literature Study," I*nternational Journal of Sustainable Development & World Ecology* 29, no. 1 (2022); Franziska Schreiber and Alexander Carius, "The Inclusive City: Urban Planning for Diversity and Social Cohesion," in *State of the World: Can a City Be Sustainable?*, ed. Worldwatch Institute (Worldwatch Institute, 2016).

2 United Nations, "Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development : A/Res/70/1," (New York: United Nations, 2015).

3 Catharine Ward Thompson and Penny Travlou, *Open Space: People Space* (Taylor & Francis, 2007); Louise Fabian and Kristine Samson, "Claiming Participation–a Comparative Analysis of Diy Urbanism in Denmark," *Journal of Urbanism: International Research on Placemaking and Urban Sustainability* 9, no. 2 (2016).

4 David Seamon, *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement: The Selected Writings of David Seamon* (New York: Routledge, 2023).

5 Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, "Place Attachment Enhances Psychological Need Satisfaction," *Environment and Behavior* 49, no. 4 (2017).

6 Jekaterina Lavrinec, "Urban Scenography: Emotional and Bodily Experience," *Limes: Borderland Studies* 6, no. 1 (2013).

7 Lynne C Manzo and Patrick Devine-Wright, *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

meaning, and agency touching on issues of power in the spatial setting.[8] To achieve a full account of peoples' inclusion into the design of spaces in co-production of landscapes, individual perspectives need to be understood, which has been argued by Ruggeri[9] as an important element of agency that can truly convert into the collectiveness of place.

This article aims to explore the nature of the cognitive and emotional processes of place-making and space (re)appropriation during artistic intervention from the 'artist's' perspectives, to understand if land art as an artifying project could re-signify and create place meaning to generate inclusiveness of spaces. Additionally, the idea is to explore to which extent this process gives and changes the awareness of place for these individuals, to empower them to be "placemakers," as inspired by De Certeau's[10] argument that different meanings can be attributed to places through active involvement with a place. This idea will be more explored in the next session, where we will explain the interconnections between doing a creative practice as a way to re(signify) place meaning and bring awareness to place positioned within environmental psychology research.

Understanding the links between an artification practice and re(signification) of place meaning

This paper explores the parallel processes of using the concept of "artification" and the construction of "place." Both concepts involve the dynamic interpretation and creation of meaning through ongoing resignification.

Artification, in this article, refers to the dynamics of symbolic and practical displacement of art creation through resignification, involving an understanding of the processes of the perceptions during this creation, drawing from the definition proposed by Shapiro and Heinich.[11] They posit a focus on the dynamics of displacement of an object from its original concept, assigning a new name to the object or practice, and re-categorizing the object as belonging to the realm of art. As Shapiro and Heinich discuss, the realm of art is an ever-evolving cultural understanding that is often defined by the power representations of the elites. They discuss that the meaning and values attached to what is an artistic object shift within cultural practices, groups, and times, and that new narratives and interpretations emerge, elevating the interpretation of the object into the realm of art. An artified object transformation that works to ressignificate everyday

8 Lynne C Manzo, "For Better or Worse: Exploring Multiple Dimensions of Place Meaning," *Journal of environmental psychology* 25, no. 1 (2005).

9 Deni Ruggeri, "The Agency of Place Attachment in the Contemporary Co-Production of Community Landscapes," in *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Application*, ed. Lynne Manzo Patrick Devine-Wright (New York: Routledge, 2020).

10 Michel de Certeau, "The Practice of Everyday Life," (Berkeley: CA: University of California Press, 1984).

11 Roberta Shapiro and Nathalie Heinich, "When Is Artification?," *Contemporary Aesthetics* (Journal Archive), no. 4 (2012).

practices and objects can create a critical perspective of re(signification) that explores the awareness of everyday practices and art practices.

Cultural, urban, and landscape architecture researchers, specifically related to place-making and critical urban research, have provided art-based examples related to landscape design and urbanism. Many such examples have used art interventions to specifically challenge the understanding of urban space as static since the creative interventions emphasize the dynamic and movement-based aspects of place.[12] Focuses include ephemeral initiatives of creating an examples in a place, such as a project with a situationist approach of creating situations in the city,[13] similarly, another project with an approach called tactical urbanism, providing flexible and temporary transformations of urban spaces.[14] Furthermore, other examples are of physical approaches through visualization externalizing the movement patterns of objects and people in the physical design/performative position of citizens,[15] and of promoting bottom-up cultural policy actions to create community-led and place-based arts.[16]

In these perspectives, the art interventions challenge the existing understanding of arts with a social-cultural perspective. However, many of these interventions that want to contribute to the inclusion of people lack the individual and personal experiences of place. Here we also argue that an individual perspective of the processes of artification is missing. Personal perspectives can allow us to examine the creator´s experiences of encountering a place, which would possibly push the boundaries about their understanding of a place, which could in turn inform the collective and cultural point of view.

David Seamon, from a geographical and environmental phenomenological perspective, explains that the experience of place exists with a naturally uncritical acceptance and awareness of the existence and influence of place(s) on our experience.[17] The meaning of place is constantly being co-created through interactions with it and our interpretations, as our understandings culturally change. However, an individual relationship between person and place is not a simple directional one that is

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12 Nanna Verhoeff and Sigrid Merx, "Mobilizing Inter-Mediacies: Reflections on Urban Scenographies in (Post-) Lockdown Cities," *Mediapolis: A Journal of Cities and Culture* 5, no. 3 (2020); Tanja Beer, Lanxing Fu, and Cristina Hernández-Santín, "Scenographer as Placemaker: Co-Creating Communities through the Living Stage Nyc," *Theatre and Performance Design* 4, no. 4 (2018). Eleonora Redaelli, "Creative Placemaking and Theories of Art: Analyzing a Place-Based Nea Policy in Portland, Or," *Cities* 72 (2018).

13 Beer, Fu, and Hernández-Santín, "Scenographer as Placemaker: Co-Creating Communities through the Living Stage Nyc."

14 Paulo Silva, "Tactical Urbanism: Towards an Evolutionary Cities' Approach?," *Environment and Planning B Planning and Design* (2016).

15 Verhoeff and Merx, "Mobilizing Inter-Mediacies: Reflections on Urban Scenographies in (Post-) Lockdown Cities."

16 Redaelli, "Creative Placemaking and Theories of Art: Analyzing a Place-Based Nea Policy in Portland, Or."

17 Seamon, *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement: The Selected Writings of David Seamon.*

socially constructed and of reciprocal influence. Instead, it represents a more fundamental, constitutional co-dependency for every individual, in which a multilayered constitution of meaning for a place is temporal and ever-changing and can be passive or active.

Currently, place is understood in the people-environment fields, as an ever-developing process: one that is created through direct embodied individual and collective experiences, as well as the narratives and norms that give meaning to spaces, from an individual perspective to complex socio-ecological relationships spanning across space and time[18]. Research about place has examined how place experiences happen during every moment as well as longitudinally. The latent and deeper sense of identity within a place, for example, develops over time.[19] Experiences and interactions, events, news, and changes in places, shape the individual and collective meanings of spaces. New experiences can transform a place imbued with significance, which in turn plays a central role in shaping who we are. Although we are not always consciously aware of the impact of place in our personal narratives, this existence influences our cognitive, affective, and active experiences within spaces. Casey[20] argues that awareness of place can empower individuals to have an active use of re-resignification of spaces for their benefit. Recent reviews in place literature have called on research on place creation to account more for the dynamic evolving experiences people have in spaces, touching on the latent issues of identity and belonging.[21] Jennifer Cross[22] argued that the interactive nature of an individual's co-occurring processes in place is central for events of the significance of place. Developing a sense of awareness about the way we relate to places, through empowering place-creation activities, can increase a perceived feeling of stewardship towards a place.[23] Specifically, art interventions, by means of creative practice, could be used as a positive tool for the development of place awareness and place making. Many examples have shown that creative

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18 Patrick Devine-Wright et al., ""Re-Placed" - Reconsidering Relationships with Place and Lessons from a Pandemic," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 72 (2020); Ann E Bartos, "Children Sensing Place," *Emotion, Space and Society* 9 (2013); Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, "Comparing the Theories of Interpersonal and Place Attachment," *Place attachment: Advances in theory, methods, and applications* (2014); Manzo and Devine-Wright, Place Attachment: Advances in *Theory, Methods and Applications*; Marino Bonaiuto et al., "Place Attachment and Natural Hazard Risk: Research Review and Agenda," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 48 (2016).

19 Eg: Devine-Wright et al., ""Re-Placed" - Reconsidering Relationships with Place and Lessons from a Pandemic."; Kalevi Mikael Korpela, "Place-Identity as a Product of Environmental Self-Regulation," *Journal of Environmental psychology* 9, no. 3 (1989); Kalevi M Korpela et al., "Stability of Self-Reported Favourite Places and Place Attachment over a 10-Month Period," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 29, no. 1 (2009).

20 Edward S Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena," *Senses of place* 27 (1996).

21 Manzo and Devine-Wright, *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications*. Maria Lewicka, "Place Attachment: How Far Have We Come in the Last 40 Years?," *Journal of environmental psychology* 31, no. 3 (2011).

22 Jennifer Eileen Cross, "Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework," *Symbolic interaction* 38, no. 4 (2015).

23 Jennifer D. Adams et al., "Sense of Place," in *Urban Environmental Education Review*, ed. Alex Russ and Marianne E. Krasny (Cornell University Press, 2017).

interventions can promote iterative experiences of creating a claim on place or repairing the ownership of spaces.[24]

Through reflection, questioning, and new experiences, a (re)signification process could bring more awareness to understand how place shapes us and how we shape them, which in turn can explain the processes of (re)gaining place ownership and inclusiveness. As the artification concept promotes a process of resignification that in turn can bring awareness to different aspects of the art, it is a logical inference that a place-based artification in situ could bring awareness and reflection to the transformation of landscape and place. In essence, the idea is that a heightened awareness of place could be achieved through the unification of an artification experience with a reflective experimentation. This process gives the artist a tactile, experiential grasp of how the environment shapes us while we shape it in a creative moment.

Land art, as we will further explore and describe, is understood in this article as a form of artification intervention that uses the landscape as a medium. Land art was selected for being a type of creative expression that naturally aims at a resignification of a landscape, and that entails attentive reflection towards one's surroundings in a space.

A perspective of the history of Land art informing on creative practices for place making and place awareness

Land art historically has been an international performance art movement that can be broadly described as an artistic creation execution in nature, which is conditioned by and created in dialogue and intra-actions with a natural landscape.[25] The movement was mostly popular in the 1960s and 1970s, a period of highly revolutionary art movements that questioned the way that art had been produced in history, and it was proposed as a way to combine art, which is traditionally displayed indoors, with nature.[26] As Ben Tufnell[27] presented, in the history of land art, two different movements could be distinguished: the American and the European land art movement. The early American landscape artists performed experiential shapes and structures of artwork in very large landscapes, formed with heavy machinery and a great deal of resources, some of these being deserts and impoverished environments abandoned by the industry. Their goal was to produce intensive art projects that often aimed to be histori-

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24 Casey, "How to Get from Space to Place in a Fairly Short Stretch of Time: Phenomenological Prolegomena."

25 Ben Tufnell, *In Land: Writings around Land Art and Its Legacies* (California: John Hunt Publishing, 2019).

26 Canan Cenggz and Pelin KeÇeCgoĞlu DaĞli, "Land Art within the Context of Landscape and Art " in *INTERNATİONAL EUROASİA Congress on Scientific Researches and Recent Trends-V* (Azerbaijan2019).

27 Tufnell, *In Land: Writings around Land Art and Its Legacies.*

cally relevant. A classic example of this is a large spiral in a shallow water space made from six and a half tons of gravel and earth, produced by the artist Robert Smithson, entitled "Spiral Jetty." Another is James Turrel's still existing and developing project "Roden Crater," a large-scale artwork created within a volcanic cinder cone. These two examples are monumental projects designed to be long-lasting alterations in the environment and observed from a distant perspective.

European land artists superseded the first movement, moving away from a large perspective towards a local, meditative perspective, aiming to bring attention to the environment and to change our spiritual and emotional relationship with nature. European landscape artists defined their land art more simply, often through the performance of minimalist gestures in nature, underscoring the artist´s reflection on ephemerality, to encourage appreciation of nature rather than of the artist. Here, land art was often performed with few resources, often completely natural, and simple gestures that involved causing minimal impact and alteration in a natural landscape.[28] The ephemerality of these land art projects was characterized by their impermanence and transience and posed an intervention that could bring awareness to these ever-changing conditions of spaces.

Currently, there are several examples of artists using land art as a way to influence our relationship with places. One example is Julian Charrière, a contemporary Swiss artist, who takes pictures of performances in natural landscapes in remote and extreme environments often uninhabited by humans, where he explores the themes of absurdism and climate change. Another example is Andy Goldsworthy, who creates temporary workpieces with his body that highlight natural unpredictability: the sun that melts ice, a wind that blows leaves away, and flower petals that become a shape together. Central aspects of Goldsworthy's art are simplicity and delicacy, combined with complexity, strength, and changeable shapes and textures.[29] These two contemporary artists raise the aspect of charging a simple, artistic alteration in space with meaning.

The land art movement was taken as an inspiring concept in this project for utilizing natural materials and textures, which could be a practical way to prompt individuals to engage with the landscape through sensorial contact with place. Also, land art interventions are not placed within a location upfront, but created in conversation with the context of the place. This direct and active engagement with elements of the landscape could offer to develop a deeper awareness about external places.

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28 Stephanie Ross, *What Gardens Mean* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998).

29 Emily Brady, "Aesthetic Regard for Nature in Environmental and Land Art," *Ethics, Place & Environment* 10, no. 3 (2007).

Methodology

The land-art creative activity was a specific intervention (art-practice) based on a creative art project. With a series of site-specific installations, participants were asked to develop an individual reflection about their personal experience of a place. This interdisciplinary qualitative perspective was based on theories of place[30] and the comprehensive views of processes of place from an individual perspective,[31] through a perspective so-called here as a comprehensive view of embodied lived experiences from phenomenology. Furthermore, this project includes elements from in-depth reflections on experience.

The intervention is strongly rooted in the first author´s years of academic lecturing experience involving place-activity in a master's course. A Land art exercise was implemented in an international, distance-based master's course run through Zoom. This is an environmental psychology course aimed to give students a psychological understanding of how people's emotional bonds to specific places evolve during life, with special attention given to the role of natural elements for restorative activity and formations of emotional bonds to specific places and nature at large.

The course is composed of students who have completed bachelor's of different disciplinary identities, in which students normally had already completed some courses in environmental psychology. Students have backgrounds in city planning, landscape architecture, architecture, pedagogy, and health fields. They were located in different areas of the world, mostly in Europe. A positive aspect of having place-informed students is that they already had, to some degree, theoretical awareness of the place and a phenomenological perspective, which here, theoretically, increased the richness and variation of the data in terms of place experience about performing an artification project in relation to place-meaning.

The exercise comprised an introductory lecture, in place or via Zoom. This lecture introduced the historical perspective of land art, which is the same previously described in this article. After the lecture, the environmental psychology students received a time-slot to do a land-art project in a public space characterized by natural elements, such as a garden or park, followed by an observation exercise. The project was introduced with a focus on reciprocal exploration, with the task to create an art project in connection to the landscape/spaces surrounding them. A foundation in the exercise was to let nature and the landscape dictate the conditions, thus requiring attentiveness to the prerequisites of the place. Students were asked to focus on the processes of creation that are experiential, not

30 Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford, "Defining Place Attachment: A Tripartite Organizing Framework," *Journal of environmental psychology* 30, no. 1 (2010); Seamon, P*henomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement: The Selected Writings of David Seamon*.

31 Cross, "Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework."

the aesthetical creative tangible product.

The creative execution of the exercise was therefore dependent on the person and the place where it was carried out. It was important to make sure that the land art did not interfere with the place's ability to return to its natural state after the exercise, due to an attention to focus on the ever-changing ephemerality of spaces. This was done to respect different laws and cultural habits that exist internationally and to promote a variety of examples of experiences. Further, asking for this focus avoided creative work that would either pollute the environment or possibly cause social problems for the students.

After the exercise was conducted, the students were asked to take photos and reflect in a text about the processes of performing the task, based on their personal experiences and observations. Afterward, they published their reflections in a discussion forum online, which was accessible to all of the students and teachers. In this way, students could read and comment on each other's texts.

During the first year of implementation (2019), the exercise took place in the park surrounding the campus building at SLU campus building at Alnarp, in south of Sweden. It was carried out individually or in small groups of 3-5 students. In the following years, when in-place teaching was restricted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the start meeting happened via Zoom, and the exercise was carried out independently at a public space of the choice of the student. Some of the students performed the exercise in natural environments (e.g. forest, beach, field), while others performed it in semi-natural areas designed within urban environments (e.g. park, sidewalk, border of canal). The great majority of students were located in Europe, yet, a couple of students completed their exercise in Asia and North America.

For this article, one of the authors carried out a first-stage analysis, by Braun and Clarke,[32] which included analyzing the material produced by students during three consecutive years: 2019, 2020, and 2021. Around 60 participants informed this study. They were based at different international locations, pertaining to different age ranges, genders, ethnicities, and disciplinary backgrounds. More than 60' narratives were collected, including two peers' comments on each text, that is over 200 written texts (comprising around 1 page each) about the individual reflections concerning the experience of land-art making. Additionally, written oral notes from the discussions in class about the exercise were reported by one of the course leaders and noted down in a separate document.

These were read multiple times by one of the authors to gain familiarity with the data. During this process of familiarization, codes were created

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32 Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke, "Using Thematic Analysis in Psychology," *Qualitative Research in Psychology* 3, no. 2 (2006).

from the comments of the students and compared across each other to look for recurring themes. The codes were then organized into themes, cross-checked against the data, and similarities and disparities against the findings were checked across the full dataset until no more disparities were detected. After observing the recurring themes and refining them, an overall thematic organization was structured based on all data sets.

To ethically involve and give voice to the participants with their valued experiential reflections, two authors Amanda Gabriel and Elisabeth von Essen, course leaders, have invited four students, here authors, Beatrice Guardini , Sara Kjellgren , Claire Peterson, Christopher Staundinger, who had completed the exercise, to participate in this article as authors. This sampling invitation was purposive, whereas we invited students who had written reflections with a richness of data about the exercise and showed deeper reflections that concerned both the experiential and relationship bonds that are intrinsic to place meaning. After the first thematic organization was written, discussions between the authors were carried out to account if the different experiences of the exercise were exposed in a representative and valid way.

The general aspects outlined in the introduction were written in the formulation as a response to the existing interdisciplinary body of literature surrounding urban art interventions as place-making practices while adopting environmental psychology lenses. Drawing from this inductive approach, a more focused avenue of thought appeared from the data collected and discussed with the students/authors. Consequently, research questions were developed to become more consistent with the experiential phenomenological aim of describing the place processes within the lived experience of the environmental psychology students. The research questions that emerged from this process were: "What is the nature of the embodied cognitive and emotional processes of art-making and place-making among an international group of master's students? How does cognitive awareness of place-meanings manifest and get attributed during a land art activity? To what extent do these experiences provide a sense of inclusiveness in a place?"

This text adopted the phenomenological practice of "bracketing," suggested by Hyckner,[33] as it is to note down the researcher's interpretations of the life-worlds described in openness to emerging meanings as to separate them to descriptiveness of the data. These thematic presumptions were discussed with all authors, and the overall structure and summaries of analysis were validated by all to confirm the interpretations.

The empirical findings of this article derive from the result of the thematic analysis of the full data (narratives), and the purposefully selected passages of the original comments posted on the educational platforms

33 Richard H Hycner, "Some Guidelines for the Phenomenological Analysis of Interview Data," *Human studies* 8, no. 3 (1985).

during the exercise, written and organized in collaboration between the students and authors themselves. Therefore, the thematic processes here described constitute the experience of around 60 participants, during three different years. Nevertheless, the quotes and pictures include exemplifications from the 4 of the authors in this article.

Stages of the individual processes in the experience of performing a creative land-art intervention

The implementation of the land art exercise has shed light on several aspects concerning the psycho-physical processes happening at the moment of execution of the land-art project. These include the relationships between individuals and the experience of place itself while revealing a series of emotional, affectional, and cognitive processes in performing the creative art exercise from the artists' perspectives. Environmental properties and sensorial experiences were identified as centrally occurring and will be expanded through narrative examples of the situations below.

Based on the analysis reported, as well as communication with students and teachers across the three years during which the exercise was implemented, a widely expressed experience was that the land art exercise functioned as an emotionally loaded experience, with intensity of cognitive and affective reactions, and emotional/experiential shifts that happened very quickly. Many of the students reported starting the exercise with a pre-conceived idea of which project they would develop, and an expectation of creating the project in place. The initial preconceptions about how the art should be as a finished object or how the execution would appear in terms of artistic results varied greatly, reflecting the heterogeneous and individual sets of concerns regarding the artistic execution.

When arriving at the site of the performance, many of the students expressed inward-focused feelings, emotional experiences of nervousness, worry, anxiety, and social awareness, which then transformed into the final experience of calmness and sense of ease. The majority of final artifacts produced were different from the expected conceptualized idea and reflected more the students' inter-play with place and the landscape. At the end of exercise students valued the processes of creation and found it an enjoyable way of developing emotional connections and attributing meanings to a particular place. In this result section, we present an extract of the experiences and reflections from the exercise. To present this section visually, we propose the illustrative image below (Fig. 1), which distinguishes the different stages of place-experience during the land-art intervention: i) an initial idea (preconception); ii) becoming aware of the social environment; iii) an intuitive playful focus on the process; iv) a relaxed, reflective state; v) and a new perspective on place. This model

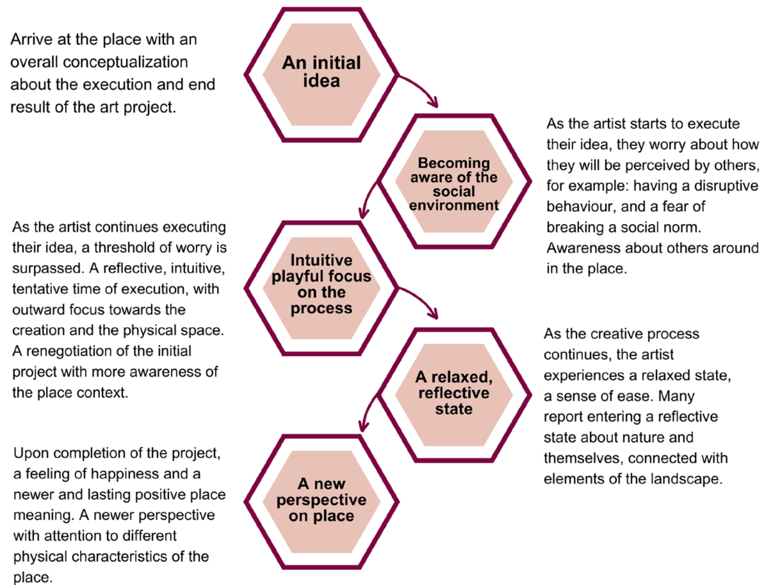

FIG. 1 Stages of the psychological processes of attention and awareness during the exercise of land art creation

can be useful for describing the results of the study, namely the emotional and cognitive experiences related to a land art performance in relation to the bodily action and the physical place, from initial concept development to the finalized artifact. Each stage is conceived from the individual perspective, which is intrapersonal of the artist´s point of view. This approach provides a better understanding of how the experience of place becomes, through an art project, a key point to enrich the multilayered aspects of placemaking research.

The description of each of these themes with empirical examples are presented below. These descriptions start from the moment the students started doing the artistic intervention, in place, after the lecture and preparation phrases, that is the stage called "Becoming aware of the social environment."

Becoming aware of the social environment

Initial experiences from the majority of accounts revealed that at the beginning of the creation process, there was an initial emotional feeling of awkwardness and embarrassment associated with creating art in a public space. The exercise seemed to trigger direct reflections of the immediate social experiences in space at first. Initially, during the first moments of performing the task, participants described a feeling of resistance to deviating from possible social norms and an embarrassment, by a described fear of reaction from others, of breaking social rules or occupying other´s spaces. The act of the performing art transgressed their shared understanding of normative public behavior, thereby constituting a significant threshold that required some negotiation for the engagement with the art.

Most "land-artists" could not foresee, now at the time of this experienced emotion, how or if they would overcome this feeling. Here are two extracts that concisely describe that experience:

> "I felt a bit of embarrassment to go in the streets and pick up stuff from the ground."

> "I felt a bit worried and self-conscious that people would be there watching and I didn't really want to be observed."

Intuitive playful focus on the process

Later, as participants initiated the activity, they described an inner creative process that was unleashed during the activity. The unleashing change from the worrying initial moment to the creative experience seemed to be connected to a more specific focus on the art-experiment itself. This was described as a shift of inward attention to outward attention to space/place. They also described employing a seemingly more intuitive approach to the creation – that is, experimenting, looking around, making decisions whilst observing the landscape and trying combinations with elements found, using sticks, stone, and loose elements, no longer with a self-judgment or fears of reaction as they had in the start of the experience. Many students named that being attentive to the surroundings and starting to do the activity left the initial negative emotional reaction aside, as of anxiety and worry, and many reported the experience of affective states of relaxation, pleasure, and of sense of ease.

Most of the students cited sensorial experiences in their narratives, accounting for the visual aspects of landscape, the sounds in the surroundings, the smells, and haptic sensations in the skin. Many of the students explained that this sensorial interaction with the landscape connected to a natural curiosity to use the elements of the landscapes and materials for the creative activity. As, for example, this student explained:

> "As I walked by the water and started looking for objects and inspiration for something to create I forgot about my inhibitions and started to relax and enjoy the process of exploring and becoming curious about what I might find."

Some specific individual situations of this awareness that are sensorial were initially negative experiences, for instance, involving an awareness of littering and focusing, therefore, on these negative aspects during the art creation as a way to understand and process the experience.

Many of the students described that they experienced an enhanced consciousness of both themselves and the spatial surroundings during the exercise, whereas they became more attentive to the characteristics of the landscape. Some described a feeling of forgetting about time and being present in the moment of the creation, i.e. a sense of flow, a more

explorative approach to artification, and a common feeling that they described as a connection with the landscape:

> Walking around with the intention to create something allowed me to immediately feel connected with the current autumn season. I realized there are so many fallen leaves, pinecones, pine needles around and I paid much more attention to how they are made, what colour they have and what is the process they go through after they fall on the ground.
>
> It became such a pleasurable activity to explore, create, and experience the place in a much more sensorial and curious way than I really ever have despite visiting there so often over the years. It felt so good to play.

When attentive to the conditions of the chosen location, many students had to adapt their initial ideas, and had to allow the place to dictate the creations:

> "My initial thought was to create a mandala of sand, leaves and seashells on a smooth rock surface by the beach. However, once I got there, it was quite windy, and I realized it would not work. I walked around a bit trying to come up with new ideas. This gave me an opportunity to look at the place with different eyes than I had ever done before. I decided to use a small patch in the sand where some round stones protruded the sand surface. When I was working, I did not give the process much thought at all, I just invented the pattern as I went along."

The great majority of accounts expressed an interactivity, as the notions of the final object that were originally pre-planned and conceptualized changed into the context of the moment. As in this example:

"My ideas for what to create evolved as I found different objects and tried to see what I could do with them. I found a long reed that I wanted to curl in a circle but found it wanted to be a triangle instead. I found a branch from a conifer that seemed out of place there, as though someone brought it from another location. I wanted to include maple and oak leaves and a feather. I started out trying to find things that were aesthetically beautiful to me but soon began appreciating and seeking out objects with unique qualities. I really became lost in the experience of noticing the diversity of things around me and I found myself getting out of my thinking, worried mind into my playful, creative mind."

Many students noticed how the unplanned characteristics of the landscapes dictated the creative motivations that they would employ in their creative exercise, whilst the experience extended into a feeling of comfort, appreciation and a reflective experience about nature in the space.

> "On the ground, I noticed a path that the rainwater had made as it drained down into the canal, like a little dried river bed. So I decided

to arrange some seeds and branches there, following the water path, thinking about how this gigantic tree was made by water and sunlight. That was comforting. The strands of young seeds that had fallen felt like strings of beads or jewelry, so I tried to make a necklace out of them too."

A relaxed, reflective state

Several of the students described the exercise as joyful, reflecting on how it seemed to allow them to experiment with a different perspective of space and while leading them to experience the chosen location differently:

When I sat watching the site, I thought through the process of making the art. I had picked a place that has already a deep meaning to me, and that I am already very attached to, but I realized that by focusing on the art, I had seen the place in another way. Instead of the big picture I normally see, I now saw shapes and colours. I focused on each stone, on the shape of it and how it would best fit with my leaves. This gave me a different experience of the place. Whilst the beach will still be the same, a place from where I have many fond memories, the small patch of stones in the sand will forever be changed into the place where I sat in the autumn breeze placing leaves, and even though the leaves are gone I will remember the way it looked.

FIG. 2 A land art installation in the project that evolved as the "land-artist" engaged with the materials in place. The "land-artist" expressed how they became lost in the experience of noticing the diversity of things around her.

A new perspective on place

Overall the exercise seemed to make a lasting impression on the students. Many described how they remembered the experience when passing by the space in the following days. In a period ranging from three months to

FIG. 3 A creation where the participant realized that by focusing on the land art creation, they had seen the place in a new way, focusing on small details as shapes and colors.

years after the exercise was conducted, some students reported that they went back to their locations and further developed their land art. Others did the exercise again together with family members or at another location. Some reported that they had found photos of their land art on social media.

Several of the students experienced a change in other people's behavior both when they performed the land art intervention, but also when they observed from far their reactions. Some described how the land art exercise created social interactions with other people, which is something that was experienced through positive and surprising experiences. One participant, from her perspective, described how she could notice three different types of behavior:

> Curious behavior: Some people were just stopping by to figure out what this weird thing was, what it was made of or just for saying "look!"
>
> Careless behavior: especially bikers (maybe they didn't see my art ?) They were just passing over it and not stopping or getting slower.
>
> Cautious behavior: Most of the people were actually careful when crossing the root crack. A woman lifted her heavy luggage not to ruin it, other people were just taking a bigger step over it.

Another participant, creating his land art under a big tree, noticed how his creation possibly attracted a family's attention, but also wondered if it was actually him that occupied *their* place, which he felt uncomfortable

towards:

> I noticed a parent and two kids looking over at me from a bench and it made me wonder whether this land art thing was attracting their attention to this tree or maybe I was actually occupying a place they liked to play in. They came and played inside the space that the tree makes. I left and sat nearby and watched them stack sticks and pat the side of the tree with their hands. (...) They crawled inside of the circle where I'd made the tree necklace.

At other locations no one noticed the art, but the process evoked reflections about the perception of places:

> I think that if someone WOULD have noticed the art, it could have changed the place for them as well, from just a piece of beach to a place where they once saw a pattern that somebody made there. Perhaps they would have been curious about it and wondered who had done it.
>
> It made me reflect on how easy it is to shape the environment around us with small interventions. Yet how a very simple change in the landscape can cause a big change in people's behaviour.

FIG. 4 One of the artists filled a root's crack with natural material at hand and reflected on how a very simple change in the landscape could cause a change in social behavior, as people passing by during the observation phase changed their directions and jumped over the land-art.

Discussion

Interdisciplinary studies within people-environment research have called on scholars to expand the understanding of the cognitive, bodily, emotional, and individual processes related to place experiences,[34] by means of creative activities, especially by attending the promotion of modifiable scenographies in everyday spaces.[35] This study explored qualitatively: a) what is the nature of the embodied cognitive and emotional processes of art making and place-making among an international group of master students, b) how cognitive awareness of place-meanings manifests and

34 Cross, "Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework."

35 Lavrinec, "Urban Scenography: Emotional and Bodily Experience."

FIG. 5 A participant created a necklace made of seeds and wondered if his land art attracted a family's attention toward the tree, while observing the behavior of people from a distance.

is attributed during a land art activity and c) to what extent these experiences provide a sense of inclusiveness in a place. Through these questions, the research contributes to understanding how urban placemaking could be enriched by considering the individual's lived experiences.

Through a thematic analysis of personal narratives, it was shown that people located in different geographic regions performing the same task during three consecutive years, including participants of different ages, cultural, and disciplinary backgrounds, can have similar experiences when practicing land art in a public space. This was a process of shifting emotional experience characterized by shifts in one's perception of attention, awareness, and appraisal of relaxation. This process has been interpreted here as impactful on their inclusiveness in place-meaning - by an increased feeling of belonging, through perceived positive identification of the self with place. Concerning the potential mechanisms, the experiences seemed to generate a perceived affective reaction of relaxation, through a sensorial experience of space and activity through a playful engagement with the project.

The processes described during the creative activity could be analyzed with environmental psychology and phenomenological lenses. Initially, students reported the experience of a separation between the self and the physical environment. This aligns with phenomenological understandings of the natural attitude, described by Giorgi,[36] as an unawareness of the embodied consciousness we have with the context of the world. The activity seemed to facilitate a suspension of this initial judgment of fear, attending to a shift of focus outwards towards the landscape and space. The act of experimentation broke down the initial duality, fostering what some described as a sense of participation and inclusivity between the self and the environment. The passage suggests an experience of attention and consciousness to the environment and experience, something

36 Amedeo Giorgi, "An Application of Phenomenological Method in Psychology," *Duquesne studies in phenomenological psychology* 2 (1975).

that could be described as the state of flow.[37] The worry seemed to recede, as many described becoming more aware and present in the creative act. Previous studies have assessed how a direct inwards involvement triggered by natural elements could be preparatory for individuals' emotional engagement with others and then active participation in social settings, as well as in urban contexts.[38] Additionally, a systematic review looking into different examples of art-based interventions for children and young people, found that the art-intervention in nature tended to increase nature connectedness and environmental awareness.[39]

In the process of creating land art, it appears that the creative execution became an intuitive process when perception shifted towards awareness of the place, which in turn led to the processes of art creation. That the art process is intuitive and often changes instead of being characterized by a focused cognitive demand, is something that art research has repeatedly confirmed.[40] Since the focus of the exercise was to let the place dictate the conditions of the art, the process of execution, or the place itself, seemed to trigger awareness of the surroundings, which seemed to allow participants to have more open, explorative attention to the small details in the environment, as an unexpected playful opportunity, supported by many loose materials found in the space. This consisted of the possibility to use stones, sticks, and other natural resources at hand, and move these around, without a predefined design. Rather, the intuitive experience of moving things back and forth seemed to be related to the outcome of a mindful experience. Another project that explored the processes of creative interventions, this time in nature, has also found that playfulness was an important perceived aspect from the artist´s perspectives to be creative.[41] In that project, Plambech and Van den Bosch hypothesized that the visual aspects of the natural environment could trigger a creative experience that is playful and explorative. In this study, not all projects were carried out in a fully natural context, as many were performed in semi-natural planned areas within the city, but still with some kind of natural elements at hand.

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37 Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Mihaly Csikzentmihaly, *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*, vol. 1990 (Harper & Row New York, 1990).

38 Igor Knez et al., "Wellbeing in Urban Greenery: The Role of Naturalness and Place Identity," *Frontiers in Psychology* (2018); Anna Bengtsson and Patrik Grahn, "Outdoor Environments in Healthcare Settings: A Quality Evaluation Tool for Use in Designing Healthcare Gardens," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 13, no. 4 (2014).

39 Zoe Moula, Karen Palmer, and Nicola Walshe, "A Systematic Review of Arts-Based Interventions Delivered to Children and Young People in Nature or Outdoor Spaces: Impact on Nature Connectedness, Health and Wellbeing," *Frontiers in Psychology* (2022).

40 Merlin Donald, "Art and Cognitive Evolution," *The artful mind: Cognitive science and the riddle of human creativity* 1 (2006).

41 Trine Plambech and Cecil C. Konijnendijk van den Bosch, "The Impact of Nature on Creativity – a Study among Danish Creative Professionals," *Urban Forestry & Urban Greening* 14, no. 2 (2015).

Anthropologist Tim Ingold[42] promotes the idea that the dynamic interplay we have with place can be fueled with a playful engagement through the introduction of inquiries and lines of becoming in a space. Tim Ingold argues that a focus on the processes of creation, as also described in this study, can lead to a more mindful and relaxed connection with the space at the moment. Playful inquiry, in his conceptualization, refers to approaching the interaction of individuals with the environment with a non-goal-oriented approach, characterized by experiment and exploration, through which he argues we can receive more knowledge about place and shape the character of place-meaning. In the same way, this present study shows a central repeated experience of enjoyment through the unexpected playful opportunity found during the activity. This spontaneity and focus on place at the moment of performance seemed to have triggered Ingold´s notion of exploration as discovery and improvisation, through the intuitive process that many experienced. The use of loose materials and natural resources at hand resonates with the concept of "lines of becoming." As participants create with these materials, temporary trails appear in place, in conversation with what is present at the moment, and shape the place in their perceptions.

Participants of this study described attention to the multisensory characteristics of the place through descriptions of the landscape elements (eg: biodiversity; elements that could be moved; trees; stones), haptic perceptions (eg: the touch of wind in the skin), and sound (eg: the sound of others around them). These experiences were described to be relevant and central for their creative development; which they experienced in an outward sense of ease in a variety of conceptual differences within their identities. A previous paper by Ratcliffe and Gatersleben has also found the sensorial experiences of place to be important for the development of creative activities in nature from the artists´ perspectives.[43] Sensorial experiences have been highlighted in phenomenological discourses as central to our understanding and experiences of place.[44] Variations of ways we perceive physical characteristics of space exist—based on individual experience, cultural values, or viewing conditions.[45] When the sensory experience of places changes, research has shown that this can alter the meanings and experience of a place, and thus can threaten or enhance place creation and active engagement with the landscape at place, depending on the subjective and individual meaning associated with the perception

42 Tim Ingold, "Against Space: Place, Movement, Knowledge," *Boundless worlds: An anthropological approach to movement* (2009); *The Life of Lines* (Abingdon, Oxon ;: Routledge, 2015); *Being Alive : Essays on Movement, Knowledge and Description* (Abingdon, Oxon ;: Routledge, 2011).

43 Eleanor Ratcliffe et al., "Understanding the Perceived Benefits of Nature for Creativity," *The Journal of creative behavior* 56, no. 2 (2022).

44 Seamon, *Phenomenological Perspectives on Place, Lifeworlds, and Lived Emplacement: The Selected Writings of David Seamon.*

45 Cross, "Processes of Place Attachment: An Interactional Framework."

changes.[46] This project has evidence that suggests that a great variety of sensorial input in a place – ie: landscape, plants, natural richness, biodiversity, water, and sounds – relates to an experience of creativity and ease, even accounting for individual differences.

The structure of the land art exercise and the focus on the processes seemed to have been a central aspect of the exercise. An issue found in the years running this exercise is the worry and fear, expressed in the classroom before the experience, that participants would produce something "ugly" or not "appropriate". Regenia Gagnier discusses that culturally, many Western individuals, when posed with the task of producing or creating something, naturally think about the object result of the process, and the creation of what they assume to be culturally and aesthetically pleasing, which has shown in return to trigger performance anxiety.[47] The goal of the exercise was to increase place significance and focus on the experience, something that the participants seemed to achieve when leaving the aesthetic result aside and focusing on the processes of creation. The task also opened up an opportunity to reframe an artistic intervention, questioning the object result of art within the landscape, opening up possibilities that are different and new, rather than highbrow. These re-signification processes, which can question definitions of art and propose new solutions within the cultural perspective, are sensitive topics argued by Shapiro[48] to be central in the production of artifacts.

The experiences of relaxation described in this study seemed also to be of affective centrality for restorative opportunities during the performance, which is an aspect that has been widely explored in many examples within environmental psychology studies.[49] Restorative environments are in most cases natural environments that can promote a restoration of the perceptual cognitive properties and their generic focuses. Attention restoration theory[50] posits that restorative environments can engage an individual's attention to a more effortless focus, called "soft fascination," which can offer a sense of "being away" from everyday life and worries, and become compatible with the individual´s desires and aims, also related to social engagement and active participation. ART suggests that this process can lead to a recovery from stress caused by resource-intensive cognitive life.

46 Manzo and Devine-Wright, *Place Attachment: Advances in Theory, Methods and Applications.*

47 Regenia Gagnier, *The Insatiability of Human Wants: Economics and Aesthetics in Market Society* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000).

48 Shapiro and Heinich, "When Is Artification?."

49 Eg:Terry Hartig, Marlis Mang, and Gary W Evans, "Restorative Effects of Natural Environment Experiences," *Environment and behavior* 23, no. 1 (1991); Kalevi Korpela, Marketta Kyttä, and Terry Hartig, "Restorative Experience, Self-Regulation, and Children's Place Preferences," *Journal of environmental psychology* 22, no. 4 (2002); Terry Hartig et al., "Nature and Health," *Annual review of public health* 35 (2014); Gregory N. Bratman et al., "Nature and Mental Health: An Ecosystem Service Perspective," *Science Advances* 5, no. 7 (2019); Terry Hartig, "Restoration in Nature: Beyond the Conventional Narrative," (Springer International Publishing, 2021).

50 Rachel Kaplan and Stephen Kaplan, *The Experience of Nature: A Psychological Perspective* (CUP Archive, 1989); *The Experience of Nature : A Psychological Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Pr., 1989).

This connection has previously also been found in another study about creative experiences in nature, in which Ratcliffe et. al[51] interviewed artists to understand the relevance of the natural environment for their professional and creative activities.

In a positioning paper, Williams et. al.[52] argued that creativity and nature experience could be linked to alternating processes of mind wandering and attention restoration. In the present study, we also found some tentative evidence of these processes, triggered through creative activity, which seemed to happen in different types of places, such as highly natural and semi-natural areas. These movements happened especially after the social awareness disappeared, and the creative activity continued. In fact, some participants developed their "projects" while thinking about their own lives or reflecting, for example, on the grandiosity of a tree, the roles of nature, the characteristics of space, the shape and sounds of water, and how these could metaphorically connect to the self.

The process of land art-creation within this project revealed an example of artification,[53] as an iterative process of transforming landscape elements into art. This is an artification primarily involving the experience of displacement and re-cognition of place by the perception of the "artist" himself. This, in turn, is related to the process of transforming the perceptual experience of place, through increased awareness and a different attribution of meaning to places. This project highlights a shift in perceptions that joins the processes between the "artwork" and the perceiver as a signifier of meaning concerning a place.

This project shows evidence of how a creative experience that aims at ressignifying the object and the environment can have a role in shaping our understanding and creation of place. We found that the land-art activity promoted a change in the participants' perceptions about a place, as many described coming to the place several times after the activity, almost as developing a sense of ownership. The artification processes in place research could have been related to what phenomenological researcher David Seamon[54] proposed as the process of place-meaning creation called "place release." These are different stages in the creation of place meaning, in which the individual is challenged and intrigued by place. This process is described through the following stages of experience: i) environmental serendipity, which is, to encounter something specifically intriguing in a place; ii) trigger a shift towards a more aware attention to place, which develops a chain of reactions that are active in the behavior

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51 *The Experience of Nature : A Psychological Perspective*; Ratcliffe et al., "Understanding the Perceived Benefits of Nature for Creativity."

52 Kathryn JH Williams et al., "Conceptualising Creativity Benefits of Nature Experience: Attention Restoration and Mind Wandering as Complementary Processes," *Journal of Environmental Psychology* 59 (2018).

53 Shapiro and Heinich, "When Is Artification?."

54 David Seamon, "Place Attachment and Phenomenology," *Place attachment: Advances in theory, methods and applications* (2013).

that an individual has towards place (iii). Seamon describes that these phases are aimed at examining and testing possibilities of action. In this project, we bring attention to a creative exercise as an example that can be described as a process of place release, whereas the land-art activity seemed to provide this opportunity for these sequences of shifting awarenesses that led to developed agency during art creation.

The experiences described by participants in this study start with an intra-personal level of awareness and a focus on cultural and social norms They described feelings of embarrassment and worry towards what others would think or react. Further, some participants seemed to have a need for confirmation of the land art installations, as they described expectations of being noticed and of being accepted. We could describe these expectations as perceived injunctive norms. Injunctive norms refer to the perception of what other people would disapprove of or approve.[55] As Cialdini, Raymong, and Carl explain, injunctive norms motivate behavior by creating expectations and attention of an external prospect of social reaction, either by sanction or social reward. Behavior in social environments that are public is known to show an understanding of what is perceived to be public compliance.[56] Findings such as these indicate that the perception of breaking injunctive norms on public space tend to operate through intuitive, fast, and emotional reactions, which, in this specific case, served to discourage creative allowance into the public realm.

Why is interacting with and creating ephemeral land art with found, natural material perceived as a deviation from everyday behavior? What does it say about a lack of creative agency in public spaces? These results could help illustrate the psycho-social barriers that hinder public participation in the design and use of spaces. The initial hesitance of this study's participants could demonstrate a lack of feeling of inclusiveness and ownership of place. Kathleen Irwin problematizes how engagement in the public space can be fraught with tension, as people can embrace the distinctions between those perceived as part of a community (insiders) and those who do not (outsiders). What's more, this evidence points to the importance of social norms with respect to place meaning, which could be more explored in relation to place creation for social inclusion and raising awareness about social inclusiveness or lack of it in public urban spaces. These results demonstrated that despite starting the exercise with perceived deviation of social behavior, many participants left the artification exercise with a strengthened sense of place.

As always in qualitative research, the focus is not on identifying general trends, but on the complex degrees of transferability. Participants and

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55 Robert B Cialdini, Raymond R Reno, and Carl A Kallgren, "A Focus Theory of Normative Conduct: Recycling the Concept of Norms to Reduce Littering in Public Places," *Journal of personality and social psychology* 58, no. 6 (1990).

56 Roland Benabou and Jean Tirole, "Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation," *The review of economic studies* 70, no. 3 (2003).

authors of this course were part of an environmental psychology educational program in locations internationally spread. Our sample represents a variety of ages and gender in different European countries and represents a range of demographic differences that could show a central transferability of experiences to individuals of other contexts. Some of these participants had creativity in their work, such as landscape architecture, and architecture; and some had health or psychological wellbeing practices – which had given them have an intrinsic interest in psychological experiences. This is positive, as the material was rich in varieties and diversities of examples, giving us a higher richness of data from the newbie artist´s experience.

The fact that all of the participants are novices without much notion of how land art could be done, apart from one initial lecture, affected the results, with benefits and other aspects that could be explored with experienced artists. Novices can approach the spaces for the intervention with a more blank perspective, which we can hypothesize, would provide more openness to the context and attention to place. Untrained in the land-art techniques, their interactions became more open and disconnected to the actual discourses of art creation, revealing new forms of artistic expression and opening discussions about new interpretations of what constitutes urban art and how anyone could participate in shaping the artistic landscape of a place. A project focusing on artists could bring more understanding of the relationships between environmental triggers and creative vision and could lead to more original work that could be further explored in future research.

The data used in this study was collected at the same time some students were being educated in environmental psychology. However, given that, during the data collection, we did not touch on the aspects of restoration before this exercise, we do not imagine that this is what raised the connections of restorativeness and experiences found in this study. Rather, the connections were found upon attending repeated experiences of the project.

This study, as justified, explored the gaze and perspective of the authors, and of the many students participating in the whole data setting, with sessions of conversation in class. It did not include forms of participation of the perception of others from the city, which remains a focus to be explored, to understand the potential impacts of the land art creations within the larger perspective of the space and the people in space. It focuses on the processes of the artist´s experiences, which can give us more understanding of the emotional and cognitive engagement that so far understudied. The results demonstrate how this project of land-art contributes to an understanding of urban art as a possibly ongoing, evolving experience that can be changed, adapted, and recreated. However, a part of this project was to ask for the students to observe, in a short

time, how the project of art as an object affected the movements of others within the context, which gave us some understanding of how these projects did affect other´s behaviors and focus of attention on the environment. Further research to understand the potential for affecting the inclusiveness of others is necessary.

Towards the study of inclusivity within urban spaces, we want to raise the issue that many spaces are created through top-down policies.[57] It has been argued before that in order for art interventions to advance inclusion and social community engagement, a critical perspective on the processes of installation and creation of artworks is important.[58] Furthermore, it has been argued that participatory actions within cities establish networks of inclusive and places that promote activities, attention and connections.[59] Nevertheless, it has been found by earlier research in people-environment studies that the cognitive, emotional, and affective understandings people have of space shape the experience of the place, which in turn affects a person's beliefs, attitudes, and uses of place.[60] These studies found that these experiences can trigger negative acceptance of changes or negative perceptions of inclusiveness. To that, we conclude that the genuine makeup of a city's inclusivity will be nuanced and complex and needs to account for these various aspects. Therefore, to engage in a transition towards more inclusiveness in cities through the implementation of art installations, we cannot neglect the role played by the individual psychosocial experiences and their relation with the processes of place-meaning, as it has been argued before.[61] Land art creative projects, in this article, seemed to be an emotionally complicated experience that required participants to pass a threshold of insecurity, but that ended in a positive experience of recovery, introspection, and connection to place. Our findings suggest that creative exercises, along with an awareness of the place-based creative process, gives participants deeper, more nuanced understandings of the dynamic existences of place and the relationship between the self and a place. The artification offers a positive experience of co-creating place-meaning that can be used to increase a sense of inclusiveness in cities.

57 Aurigi and Odendaal, "From "Smart in the Box" to "Smart in the City": Rethinking the Socially Sustainable Smart City in Context."

58 Joanne Sharp, Venda Louise Pollock, and Ronan Paddison, "Just Art for a Just City: Public Art and Social Inclusion in Urban Regeneration," *Urban Studies* (2005).

59 Leandro Madrazo et al., "Creating a Network of Places with Participatory Actions across Cities and Cultures," *The Journal of Public Space* (2022).

60 Elizabeth Marcheschi et al., "Residents' Acceptance Towards Car-Free Street Experiments: Focus on Perceived Quality of Life and Neighborhood Attachment," *Transportation Research Interdisciplinary Perspectives* 14 (2022); David Lindelöw, "Walking as a Transport Mode: Examining the Role of Preconditions, Planning Aspects and Personal Traits for the Urban Pedestrian," (2016).

61 Elizabeth Marcheschi et al., "A Theoretical Model for Urban Walking among People with Disabilities," *Frontiers in Psychology* 11 (2020); Devine-Wright et al., ""Re-Placed" - Reconsidering Relationships with Place and Lessons from a Pandemic."; Ruggeri, "The Agency of Place Attachment in the Contemporary Co-Production of Community Landscapes."

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PRACTICES

Area-based Urban Creativity Systems in Italy: What They Are and How to Recognize Them

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ABSTRACT

In the last decade, urban creativity has manifested itself in many proximity spaces, in particular, among its visual expressions, with the 'new muralism' (unlike 'graffiti writing' and 'street art'). This has corresponded with an often-desired resignification of public spaces that has affected the geographically, politically and linguistically more marginal territories. In such uncertain areas, networks of meaning have developed, i.e., homogeneous spaces which, simultaneously or diachronically, have begun to concentrate a plurality of works in relation to the territory to which they belong and the community. This phenomenon has been investigated in the following work, which proposes the definition of urban creativity systems. The work also deepens, among the many case studies, the urban creativity program for the social called "Parco dei Murales" conceived and promoted by INWARD - National Observatory on Urban Creativity, launched in collaboration with the resident community in a social housing complex in the Ponticelli district in Naples.

KEYWORDS
urban creativity, graffiti writing, street art, muralism.

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Wall Paintings Within Public Spaces

Art history, in all times and places, presents us with the birth and evolution of the language of murals on different levels and intends to produce expressions, communicate ideas, foment opposition, as well as to decorate pristine spaces and as a fundamental tool for the reconstruction of consciousness. In the 1920s, in Europe and beyond, the creation of extensive mural paintings was substantiated by historical, political and social events, especially with reference to the construction of an identity, either through the recovery of a historical memory or through the construction of a new recognisability. This has been, and to some extent still is, an inherent practice of mural painting, of muralism. [1] Indeed, after the two decades of Fascism[2] and since mural paintings has taken new roots in Italy,[3] it was able to express itself completely independently of Mexican or Chilean models and rather generating its own aesthetic and artistic independence.[4] The appropriation of images as a democratic and popular procedure was thus even the basis of a new concept of artistic militancy. Indeed, between the 1970s and 1980s, «there are those who see in muralism the value of a didactic experiment, to be introduced also into teaching practice first of all; those who see it essentially as an immediate instrument of struggle; those who see it as a new form of "being together," of creatively experiencing a collective moment with others; and finally, those who conceive of it as the construction of a vision and a product outside the market, that is, as an operation that finally frees art from the sphere of purely private enjoyment.[5]

Exactly concerning the perception of muralism by the communities that live, animate and inhabit the urban space where it manifests itself, the critical interpretation put forward by the scholar Rosalyn Deutsche is particularly interesting, according to which, in the political praxis of public art as a form of democracy, public space becomes social space: therefore, the function of art, born as public is to build (or to break) public spaces.[6] Here,

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1 Muralism is an artistic phenomenon that originated in Mexico in the early 1920s. It reached its expressive peak between the 1930s and 1950s, especially in Rivera, Orozco e Siqueiros.

2 In Italy, the centuries-long historical and artistic history of muralism, in its broadest sense, has never stopped on either public or private walls. The events of the Risorgimento and then of National Unity led to the flourishing of public commissions and, in particular, in the 1920s and 1930s, muralism became the medium through which to work on collective identity. The historian George Mosse described this phenomenon of mass communication with the expression 'nationalisation of the masses': in his work The Nationalisation of the Masses. Political Symbolism and Mass Movements in Germany (1815-1933), Mosse researches the remote origins of modern right-wing totalitarianisms and assesses their impact on politics and mass organisation.

3 The first evidence dates back to the 1950s on walls signed by Liliana Canu and Aligi Sassu on the walls of a primary school in Thiesi, Sardinia. However, 'officially', the history of local muralism may coincide with the date of the beginning of Sardinian muralism, that is, when in the 1960s, in the province of Cagliari, specifically in the village of San Sperate, Pinuccio Sciola (1942-2016) initiated what would later be confirmed as a regional tradition.

4 Mario De Micheli, "Preface" in *Abbasso il Grigio. Comunicazione e linguaggio murale di base nella pittura murale a Milano* (Milan: Edizioni il Formichiere, 1977).

5 Ibid., 9.

6 Rosalyn Detsche, *Evictions. Art and Spatial Politcs* (Cambridge: MIT Press 1998).

art also aims to establish direct communication with the viewer, as well as the inhabitant of a community, and, specifically, artistic practices that have made militancy the main focus of such a process have triggered, and still do trigger, social transformations in which public art becomes an engine of entertainment and economic attraction.[7] This is particularly true for public spaces that can be defined as "common", where the term alludes to the use and consumption of the same space by various groups of individuals who interact by crossing their daily trajectories; in Italy, and not only, such proximity allows interaction with the other, but it frequently occurs in those same spaces of critical socio-urbanity where the absence of congruent forms of management confirms empty, abandoned and vandalised spaces.[8]

Urban creativity between artistic recovery and social regeneration

With this in mind, during the last decade, terms such as "urban creativity"[9] – including graffiti writing,[10] street art[11] and new muralism[12] – intensively presented themselves in the proximity spaces thus defined. This has occurred in correspondence with a trend of large painted facades, a much larger and more involved active audience, a maturation of the phenomena and a development of its protagonists, and a desired re-meaning of spaces that has affected the geographically, politically and linguistically more marginal territories, in most cases. These creative and artistic practices in the public space of the urban type expose, in any case, that author and, in the case, curator and cultural operator reflect on roles,

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7 Lorenza Perelli, *Public Art. Arte, interazione e progetto urbano* (Franco Angeli: Milan 2006) 64.

8 Antonella Bruzzese, *Spazi, usi, popolazioni. Tre dimensioni necessarie per attivare spazi comuni* (Milan; Franco Angeli 2015).

9 As an expression 'urban creativity' was designed and inserted into the Italian public debate by e INWARD – The National Observatory on Urban Creativity in 2006. local public authorities, for-profit companies, social organisations, research institutions, cultural associations and operators, artists and journalists. Please see http://www.creativitaurbana.it
Graffiti writing' is an expressive and creative form that originated in the late 1960s in the suburbs of US metropolises such as Philadelphia or New York City. A characteristic element is the spontaneous and unauthorised graphic or pictorial diffusion of one's identity on various urban surfaces with elaborate writings called 'tags'. Please see http://www.creativitaurbana.it

10 Graffiti writing' is an expressive and creative form that originated in the late 1960s in the suburbs of US metropolises such as Philadelphia or New York City. A characteristic element is the spontaneous and unauthorised graphic or pictorial dissemination of one's identity on various urban surfaces with elaborate writings called 'tags'.

11 Street art is an expression that is commonly used, yet by art critics, to refer to all that is creative urban non-writing. The phenomenon, influenced by the Neo-Avant-garde and punk subculture, matured between the 1970s and 1980s; it is characterised by figurative elements and technically includes: stickers, posters, stencils, as well as appliqués and medium-sized wall paintings. It most often conveys iconic comments, satire, social and political messages, but also graphics and more.

12 The "new muralism" (also called "neo-muralism") differs from muralism as we understand it historically because the current authors cannot personally, by experience and training, and/or historically, by succession of events, disregard the advent of graffiti writing and street art, which imprints a certain attitude in the stylistics of the most recent large-scale works on façades. In this regard, it is recommended to use the terms mural/murals instead of murals/murales, as the latter are more specifically related to historical muralism.

responsibilities and knowledge useful to sensibly hold together intervention and work, space and place, as well as community and public.

In the words of Gabi Scardi, a scholar, the less defined and uncertain an area is, the more it will lend itself to processes of redefinition and development; in many of these cases, reference is made not only to geographical spaces, but also to virtual places, value systems or collective instances that are determined, even temporarily, around specific social, economic and political coordinates.[13] Truth be told, already since the 1990s, the areas where social problems and less than optimal living conditions have experienced a greater number of transformative activities and paths.[14] It would be inaccurate, to say the least, to consider interest in these liminalities circumscribed only to suburban contexts: in fact, there have been numerous contexts in which the multiplication of public bodies and local communities that have worked in favour of a resuscitation or preservation or implementation or even ex novo production of everything referable to urban creativity, as a tool – perceived as such – capable of artistic redevelopment and social regeneration, has been evident.

Therefore, when we talk about "urban creativity", that is to say of the three enclosed phenomena mentioned above, we speak of visual expressions pertaining to cultures that report themselves to be made up of writers, not necessarily artists, or social activists, not necessarily artists, or the most capable mural painters, who may not be typically artists. There are, however, of course, in the hive of urban creative productions, also artists who are aware that they are, capable of demonstrating this, systematising markets and synergies, and much more. Returning now to the above-mentioned string, intervention/work, space/place and community/audience, we can report that indeed urban creative outcomes, in their kaleidoscopic variety, can be, without thereby blurring oppositional categories, interventions that traverse spaces and make local communities a test-bed of their own determined time, or works of art fixed in the most places, for a planned or desired audience. It is the most classic of conversations between inside and outside, this side and that side, interior and exterior, which the numerous urban creative practices throughout the second half of the 20th Century have helped alienate and that, however, does not seem to be so important here.

Area-based urban creativity systems: current and historical cases

By perusing the evolution of urban creativity throughout the Italian territory, albeit with due international comparisons, one finds particular sets of

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13 Gabi Scardi, "Itinerari sensibili: l'arte incontra la società" in *Paesaggio con figura. Arte, sfera pubblica e trasformazione sociale* (Turin: Umberto Allemandi & C., 2011) 5.

14 Milena De Matteis and Alessandra Marin, *Nuove qualità del vivere in periferia. Percorsi di rigenerazione nei quartieri residenziali pubblici* (Milan: Edicom Edizioni, 2013).

interventions and works of the kind mentioned above, more cohesive and connected groupings of signs and expressions, real networks of meaning, in many cases, that make us increasingly speak of territorial systems of urban creativity', to be sought not only in the suburbs, where the concept of "beautiful" and of necessary interventions wherever something is "ugly" remains alone, pandering to dubious policies of decorum, but also in small historic centres or villages, already rich in art and culture.

Therefore, within the work herein, indicate by the expression "territorial systems of urban creativity" not entirely homogeneous spaces which, in a simultaneous or diachronic way, have seen a plurality of interventions and works concentrated on their portions or fractions, creating over time a homogeneous creative place, which has a remarkable attractive potential, which is a local signalling device, which supports the candidature as a new centrality, which is not an open-air museum since its creative and fruitive experiences are part of it, and many other characteristics. In Italy, there are dozens of similar realities and they are little known. An attempt has therefore been made to identify some salient points that can help define the components that generally characterise such urban creative systems. For example, not all systems are fuelled by events: There are festivals of urban creativity that do not initiate, implement or forcibly determine systems, while there are systems of spontaneous interventions (e.g., those arising in abandoned places). In both cases, a possible recognition is the peculiar need of communities, creative and utilitarian, to define some kind of identity. In particular, a fundamental role is played by the possible material recovery and reconnection of places aimed at improving the life of the community that has, up to that moment, renounced frequenting spaces of coexistence, such as squares, streets, gardens and other unused areas; this is part of the intentions of a territorial system that associates urban creativity with the physical improvement and service of the territory as a vital platform. Re-establishing an urban fabric, where logistics and social relations appear frayed, is a mission of integration and service qualification only possible together with other strongly localised political synergies. Urban creativity can therefore be a relevant ingredient in those programmes that envisage integrated objectives of overall revitalisation of territory, community and heritage. Structured "street art tour" proposals, offered in the form of a guided tour of the urban creativity of such a locality, are certainly also of good relevance; it is of interest to involve not only tourists, but also the citizens themselves and then scholars and researchers, since not all of urban creativity systems undergo touristification (i.e., socioeconomic change).[15]

Considering all of this, participation or at least community consciousness seems to be a peculiar element of a system that can consider itself as such; the need to respond to the needs and desires of a community and

15 Gino Satta, *Turisti a Orgosolo* (Naples: Liguori 2001)

the organisation of workshops and meetings appear to be more relevant than the implementation of pictorial works, particularly in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Although these are recent constructs, the emergence, development and failure of urban creativity systems has already resulted in cycles in Italy and, despite the widespread validity of the projects, their positive implications in terms of artistic redevelopment or social regeneration, they do not always take hold in the territories concerned.

A rather historical example of a "territorial system of urban creativity" that has undergone several transformations over time is the well-known village of Orgosolo, in Sardinia, which today has well over a thousand murals. Here, between the 1980s and 1990s, muralism experienced a moment of decline: the lack of a reformed community feeling risked turning it into an urban decoration phenomenon for the recovery of degraded private or public spaces. The opening to a pseudo-cultural tourism had already transformed the perception of the village from "town of the bandits" (like the film directed by Vittorio De Seta, starring the shepherds of Orgosolo) to "town of the murals": the defence of historical memory, in the absence of a good valorisation programme, therefore risked really transforming the community's identity into something different and far removed from the function for which the murals were born.[16] Therefore, during the mid-1990s, the group made up by muralists Pina Monne, Tony Amos, Luigi Pu and Fernando Mussone, realising the need for interventions designed in harmony with the environment, planned the work with an approach that was more respectful of both the landscape and, above all, the pre-existing murals.[17] In 2010, the Documentation Centres called Radichinas ('roots') was born. It may very well an attempt to put a legacy -sentimental in nature, first of all- in a museum. Within Francesca Cozzolino's research, it is evident that this form of musealisation emerges as a vivid conflict between acceptance and rejection of a cataloguing centre, a restoration intervention or a reference to contemporary art; it is the conflict between public memory (embodied by the museum) and private memory (the history of the murals transmitted orally, in the street, by the inhabitants themselves, often in front of the wall). The hypothesis is that since the inhabitants still experience memory in the urban space, they do not feel the need for a physically built place, such as the museum[18].

The case of Sardinian murals still dispenses much food for thought; naturally, what interests our analysis concerns not only the classification of an asset as a work of art, but that complex process of artification which,

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16 On this, for further information, please see also Francesca Cozzolino, "Il processo di artificazione nel caso dei murales della Sardegna" in *Per una sociologia delle arti* (Padua: Cleup 2012); Francesca Cozzolino, "L'histoire complexe du muralisme en Sardaigne. L'invention d'une tradition de peinture murale et ses multiples influences" in Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevo (Parigi: EHESS 2014).

17 Giulio Concu, *Murales. L'arte del muralismo in Sardegna* (Nuoro: Imago 2012) 15.

18 Francesca Cozzolino, "Murales/Orgosolo" in *Etnografie del contemporaneo IV: artification at large*, issues 40-42 (Palermo: Edizioni Museo Pasqualino 2017-2018) 101-102.

in the case of Orgosolo, is proudly connected to the defence of the village's historical memory. With regard to the so-called new muralism, the approach seems, on the contrary, to be the opposite: it is already accepted with broad consensus, both institutional and popular, as a work of art and is generally associated, due to its rather misrepresented purpose of beautification, to the practices of gentrification, a strategy or event not always peacefully welcomed.

In order to give substance to these suggestions, we now present the programmes of artistic redevelopment and social regeneration that bring together the characteristics of the territorial systems of urban creativity that, in Italy, are currently growing or changing, with a peak during the 2015 - 2019 period: Assafà, Naples; Bari Real Estate, Bari; Bonito – Paese dei Murales, Avellino; Borgo Universo, Aielli; Borgo Vecchio Factory, Palermo; Continente Creativo, Cagliari; CREAV, Naples; CVTA', Civitacampomarano; Distrart – Distretto di Arte Urbana, Messina; I DoLove, Dolo; Dozza Città d'Arte, Dozza; Farm Cultural Park, Favara; Fate Lab – San Potito Lab, San Potito Sannitico; Galleria del Sale, Cagliari; Habitat, Torino; Badìa Lost & Found, Lentini; Bag – Biennale Angelo Garofalo, Lioni; Lunetta a Colori, Mantua; MAU Museo di Arte Urbana, Torino; Memoria Urbane, Gaeta and environs; Murales in Acquapendente; Murales in Diamante; Murales in Orgosolo; Murales di San Bartolomeo in Galdo; Murales di San Gavino Monreale – Paese di Artisti; Muralì, Forlì; Muri d'Autore, Salerno; M.U.Ro Museo di Urban Art in Rome; Museo Condominiale di Tormarancia, Rome; Museo Malatesta, Campobasso; On The Wall, Genoa; OrMe – Ortica Memoria, Milan; PAG – Premio Antonio Giordano, Santa Croce di Magliano; Parco dei Murales, Naples; Periferica, Marzara del Vallo; Quore Spinato, Naples; Reggiane Urban Gallery, Reggio Emilia; SanBA, Rome; Super Walls, Padua and environs; Taranto Città Vecchia, Taranto; TUCC , Pontedera and environs; Valogno Borgo d'Arte, Sessa Aurunca; Vedo a Colori, Museo d'Arte Urbana, Civitanova Marche.

Among the aforementioned cases, which can be examined concerning the Italian contexts, an in-depth look at the urban creativity programme for social activities known as the Parco dei Murales,[19] designed and promoted by INWARD, the National Observatory on Urban Creativity,[20] and started in cooperation with the local community in a social housing complex in the Ponticelli district on the Eastern area of Naples.

The Park of the "dirty hills"

The conurbation of Naples is discontinuous and fragmented in nature, constantly subject to transformation phenomena: abandonment, marginalisation, segmentation, degradation of collective space, infrastructural

19 Giulio Concu, *Murales. L'arte del muralismo in Sardegna* (Nuoro: Imago, 2012), 15.

20 www.inward.it

crossings and disintegration of the ecosystem.[21] In this sense, on several occasions and at different latitudes, there have been interventions, projects or programmes aimed at overcoming the concept of marginality by subverting, precisely through artistic and social experience, a socio-urban condition considered insurmountable, even by residents within a neighbourhood. A feeling of rejection, which, over the years, has postponed the creation of a class of patrons, visitors and enthusiasts, in numerous cases even in the Neapolitan area, contrary to what has happened and is still happening in the northern district of Scampia, to take a winning example, where a practice of territorial reconnection has been active since the 1980s, thanks to the activities started by Felice Pignataro, a muralist (1940-2004).[22]

Besides the exceptions, taking us back to Ponticelli, having ascertained the lack of aggregation spaces and the difficulty of reaching certain places dedicated to play and recreational activities (for young mothers, in particular), together with the increase in school drop-outs in the area, the need arose to return a place of cultural and artistic interest to the community, starting with the creation of mural art works on the facades of the Parco Merola social housing blocks. The residential park, owned by the municipality, is named, as is the avenue that runs along it, after Aldo Merola, former director of the Real Orto Botanico in Naples, perhaps because of the historical agricultural vocation of that area, a former 'centrality' before it became the remnant of the industrial settlements of the boom and the working-class proletariat proliferated there. However, that park has always been derided as the "Park of the dirty hills", an insulting epithet given by its neighbours to signify poor hygiene and lack of decorum. How it has recently become known throughout Italy as the 'Parco dei Murales' is a story that must be told.

The programme, which started almost by chance in 2015, has been refined over time (the major mural work within the complex was completed in 2018) and theorised into a model articulated in its three areas: Art Field (artworks and artists); Social Field (workshops and activities) and Empowerment Field (media and tours). Having therefore started with an initial mural intervention closely related to the neighbourhood's history, the project later took on its own physiognomy, also with the collaboration of the residents - the expression 'Parco dei Murales' was theirs, and was later taken up and disseminated in the press - and thus took shape in a pictorial cycle strengthened by socio-urban experiences thanks above all to the community's response. The creative and artistic experience accompanied by social action seemed to be the only viable way forward, because

21 Rejana Lucci and Michelangelo Russo, Naples verso Oriente, (Naples: Clean Edizioni, within the Urbana - Studi per la città contemporanea Collection, 2012), 144.

22 Felice Pignataro (1940-2004) was one of the most prolific muralists of the early 1980s. More than two hundred mural interventions by the author are documented, most of them created in Campania, especially in Naples. Please see www.felicepignataro.org.

the community, which was already disinclined to take part in meetings and activities, would thus more readily receive and appreciate stimuli born in cooperation and not dropped from higher-up.

We may very well say that the social action preceded and then accompanied the artistic one, and that both were gradually juxtaposed and pressed together by the media action. As a matter of fact, the three axes immediately appeared to be the cornerstones of the programme's development. In the specifics of the initial social practice, moreover, the model derived from the progressive work recorded three relational moments with the community: focalisation, thematization, valorisation. In the first moment, the sociological staff supporting the programme focalised all that was distinctive of the residents' singular and group characters, very often familiar, and determined certain elements; in the second moment, the contact between the two parties, with the community, brought those elements into the dialogue and made them leaven, together, as the themes on which to centre the work of relationship and confrontation, between workshops and other activities; only when these themes, in the third and final moment of the social approach, were clarified and identified as values by the resident community, could the criterion be said to have been conquered and the practice of conscious sharing prior to the realisation of the works matured.

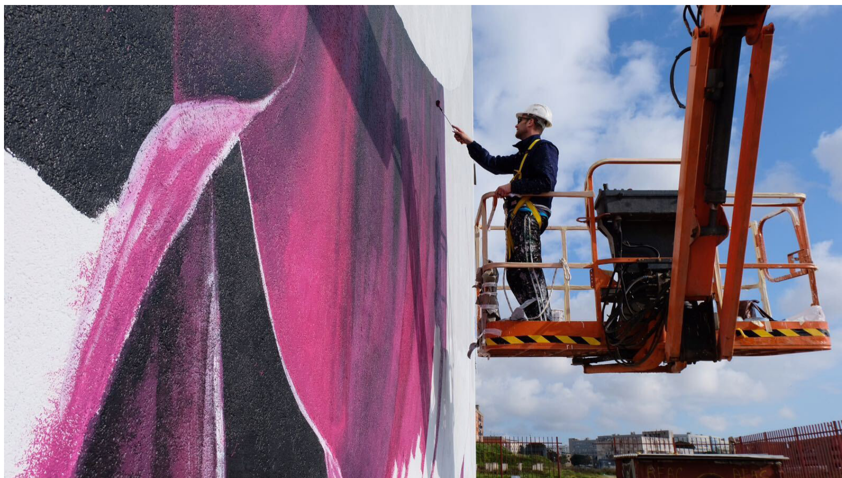

FIG. 1 Fabio Petani, O sciore cchiù felice, Park of the Murals, 2018 - Photograph by Emanuele Romano.

As a matter of fact, during the first years of its activities, large-scale territorial research was carried out; from 2015 to 2018, six annual workshops were activated and more than twenty initiatives involving, respectively, children and young people aged 5-10 and 13-14 years were completed. In the transition from social approach to curatorial practice, this form of collective involvement has been described by the curators almost as a process of participatory curatorship, an expression chosen to emphasise the contribution to change that the community itself has chosen to join. Moreover, working on such a delicate topic as the re-identification of a

FIG. 2 Zeus40, Cura 'e paure, Park of the Murals, 2018 - Photograph by Emanuele Romano.

place or of a story, one could have experienced a rejection by the community:[23] on the contrary, committing to a common goal gave back a reason for pride and even redemption, particularly felt by teenagers, as the "Parco dei Murales" took strength and gained fame.

All this would not have been possible without a process of reinterpretation of the place, not as the exclusive preserve of the operating team, but rather by the beneficiaries and visitors who contributed to making the space more and more inclusive. The children, young people and other inhabitants of the 'Mural Park' acquired, spontaneously and not through institutional training, the tools they needed to appreciate what they had created together, also participating, and perhaps for the first time, in playful-creative workshops. Here, artistic language was used as a facilitator, initiating a rather delicate process, especially in the face of the need not to censor the mural interventions and the work proposed by the artists in the area.

Having ensured some continuity regardless of the production of the murals, which were completed on eight out of eight available sides, it was therefore a massive rethinking of district relations, a process that was also monitored and verified by means of a survey administered to all the families in the council housing complex. Among the many data that emerged, there is precisely the appreciation for the creation of the play-creative workshops to replace a different and vague territorial offer, perceived as distant from family needs.

The importance of mutual aid, whether material or immaterial, was shared especially among the youngest, urging the implementation of small actions. For example, in 2017, a group of young volunteer workers - the Park of the Murals was able to activate a programme to enhance urban

23 On this, for further information, please see also Francesca Cozzolino, "Il processo di artificazione nel caso dei murales della Sardegna" in Per una sociologia delle arti (Padua: Cleup 2012); Francesca Cozzolino, "L'histoire complexe du muralisme en Sardaigne. L'invention d'une tradition de peinture murale et ses multiples influences" in Nuevo Mundo Mundos Nuevo (Parigi: EHESS 2014).

creativity with the Universal Civil Service - started a series of painting workshops on the ground floor with the aim of completing the repainting of all the hallways: the residents, at the time, suggested that these spaces should be made to match the hues of the adjoining painting interventions carried out over the years, a concrete and unhoped-for participatory triumph[24]. Such places have also been an opportunity to share, not only daily life, but also workshops; several activities, such as theatre and juggling, rap and reading, breakdancing and drawing, were conducted and shared, exactly within these regenerated spaces together.

The evidence of having contributed to the elaboration of a new urban artistic heritage is now a community fact: this is perhaps one of the most

FIG. 2 Workshop, Park of the Murals, 2017

interesting legacies of a social urban creativity programme. From a technical point of view, it will then be appropriate to reflect on the preservation or -why not- the deletion of mural interventions, to counteract something no longer in line with community needs or socio-urban transformations. It will be the future generations of inhabitants who will confirm or change their fate, recognising no longer and not only the social value, but also the artistic value, of the murals that will survive over time.

It is with remembering that, in each and every case, it is a pictorial cycle, based on the process that from a focusing of elements has led to their thematization and up to their valorisation, namely feeling a universal content as a value: Equality, Play, Reading, Sport, Motherhood, Solidarity,

24 The following colours have been selected: light green ("Ael. Tutt'egual song'e criature"); antique rose ("'A pazziella 'n man' 'e criature"); a very light orange ("Lo trattenemiento de' peccerille"); light blue ("Chi è vuluto bene, nun s'o scorda"); a cream hue ("'A Mamm' 'e Tutt' 'e Mamm'"); il blu ("Je sto vicino a te"); and violet ("'O sciore cchiù felice"); white (Cura 'e paure).

Territory and Care. In recent years, the Park of the Murals has attracted more and more visitors and promotional proposals have been relaunched, culminating with the Parco as a recurring location for various Italian films and television productions, from "Sirens" to "Gomorrah". Tours have also increased, free of charge and currently conducted by the volunteer operators of Universal Civil Service. Visitors come from all over Italy and abroad, mostly tourists, researchers, undergraduates and experts. There are numerous collaborations with local authorities and associations, about 40 from 2016 to date. Supported by a consistent and automatic mediatisation of the results, the process of reconstructing the territorial identity continues to record a solid improvement in the perception of the district, first and foremost from within.

Over the years, many meetings and conferences were held to expose and disseminate this valorisation model with an audience of both experts and enthusiasts, in order to discuss it as a possible scalable tool and thus applicable to new territories or other territorial systems of urban creativity. The Park of the Murals is one of these and teaches us that the artistic valorisation of a territory is not necessarily a guarantee of a cultural market: the heritage of numerous 'systems' in Italy, it is reflected, does not yet need sponsors or patrons for the umpteenth work, but the study of experts, the visits of enthusiasts and first and foremost of communities genuinely happy to be part of it, to recognise themselves, to find one's centre again.

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MISCELLANEA

The Symbol of Colonial Power through Urban Art: The Case of Mogadishu

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ABSTRACT
This paper explores the historical and symbolic significance of urban structures in Mogadishu, focusing on Italian colonial and religious art. Beginning with a contextualization of Italian colonialism in Somalia, the authors analyze the impact of structural interventions, particularly the construction of the Cathedral in 1928, reflecting Italy's attempt to Europeanize the city. The study employs three lenses—religious, architectonic-spatial, and political—to unravel the complexities of colonial urban art. The Cathedral, a focal point of the analysis, exemplifies the multifaceted strategy of legitimizing Italian presence through religious symbolism, spatial transformation, and political assertion. The paper critically examines how colonial architecture displaced local populations, reshaped the urban landscape, and reinforced power dynamics. It also underscores the lack of acknowledgment and debate in Italy regarding its colonial past, urging a reconsideration of colonial monuments as heritage or reminders of a contentious history. The authors emphasize the need for Italy to confront its colonial legacy, advocate for education on this topic, and challenge the perpetuation of colonial-era commemorations.

KEYWORDS
Mogadishu; Art; Religion; Colonialism; Architecture

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Introduction

Mogadishu is the most beautiful city on the African continent for some, and in the Horn of Africa for others.[1] It is certainly an ancient and beautiful city, or at least, it has long been so, after having undergone many phases and changes. Today, after several years and a civil war that destroyed much of the city, together with the advent of Al Shabaab, a reconstruction of the city is partially ongoing, even though the country's government is still unstable. On the other hand, the structures and architecture of the city, although limitedly researched, are partially remaining and witnessing the recent history of Somalia and its capital city. Much of the recent Mogadishu, before the disruption of the abovementioned events damaged it, was standing on the shoulders of the new and nationalized architecture of the city. Indeed, structural intervention have been realized under the period of Italian colonialism to Europeanize the city. The colonial sites have later been appropriated and nationalized by the Somali government at independence.[2]

This paper starts from these points to analyze the symbolic meaning and role of urban structures in Mogadishu, specifically looking at colonial and religious art in the city. Since the Somali situation is quite complex, erroneous simplifications must be specifically avoided. Therefore, these authors decided to focus on the Cathedral of Mogadishu, built in 1928 by the Italians. This choice was motivated by the historical symbolism of the Cathedral, both as a long-standing monument and a deeply critical one. To elaborate a clear analysis, this essay focuses on the role of urban colonial art overall, situating the analysis on Mogadishu through a historical contextualization of Italian colonialism in Somalia and its reception. In our exploration of urban art in Mogadishu, our aim is to illuminate the myriad contradictions inherent in colonialism, with a particular emphasis on the teleology of spaces and how they evolve into arenas of power and submission. Monuments, and specifically the abovementioned Cathedral, will be scrutinized, delving into its historical narrative and missionary purpose while situating it within the broader context of similar structures. By adopting a multidimensional approach to the Cathedral's significance, this paper endeavors to demonstrate how colonial urban art not only served as a mechanism for displacing the local population but also facilitated the expropriation of space, leading to a diminishing centrality for the indigenous culture and local social life. To achieve this, we have chosen to employ three distinct lenses: religious, architectonic-spatial, and political.

Overall, many think that colonialism shaped identities and formed modern Africa. Contrary to the Western idea that one may have, that is often

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1 Pier Maria Mazzola, "Mogadiscio ritrovata," Africarivista.it (2021, February 1), Available at https://www.africarivista.it/mogadiscio-ritrovata/179979/.

2 Mohamed Iman, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," *Interventions* (2023): 1-23.

not the case. In this specific case, these authors started thinking about this article as two good white progressives would probably do: trying to look at this issue with eyes ready to criticize everything (fairly enough) and point out all discrepancies and long-term scars left by Italian colonialism in Somalia. Nevertheless, reality often surprises, and so happens here. Indeed, colonialism is mostly evident in its hidden scars and less in its actual forms. On the evident side, Mogadishu decided to forget about Italian colonialism as much as Italy did: Fuller's concept of "colonial amnesia",[3] applied to Italy, has been re-employed by Mohamed to enlighten the post-colonial renovation process realized in Somalia at independence. Through the analysis of primary and secondary sources and archival research, this paper applies the lenses of historical analysis and looks at the interactions between architecture, colonialism, space and the readaptation of these together with the continuation of history.

Mogadishu and the Italian occupation of Somalia

The history of Somalia is strongly connected to that of its people, considered one of the largest homogeneous groups in Sub-Saharan Africa.[4] The country, which was long a fundamental commercial center on the coast, had a privileged position within the dynamics of exchange in the Indian Ocean with Mogadishu and other maritime cities that quickly became fundamental exchange points. This configuration of things favored the spread of Islamic religion together with Arabic commerce, where the religious dimension became a strong fundament for the Somali, who share common traditions and language, as well as culture, and are generally regarded as basing their unity on these homogeneities rather than on the state.[5] Noteworthy, religion walks along trade, and this favored a wide expansion of Islam in the country, becoming a strong cultural element for the Somalis. Overall, the history of the country until the first half of the 19th century is largely characterized by the advancement of Somali people from the North of the country towards the interior parts, while the coastal areas experienced a stronger connection to the Arab Peninsula, which resulted in the establishment of several Muslim emporia.[6] The Somali capital, like almost all of the Swahili coast, lost its centrality in trade within the Indian Ocean when it became a territory of conquest by the Portuguese and then by the British.[7] The first Italian explorers in 1891,

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3 Mia Fuller, "Italy's Colonial Futures: Colonial Inertia and Postcolonial Capital in Asmara," *California Italian Studies* 2 (2011).

4 Castagno A. Alphonso and Anne Winslow, *Somalia: International Conciliation*, No.522, March 1959, (Literary Licencing, LLC, 2013), 1-68.

5 Hussein M. Adam, "Somalia: Militarism, Warlordism or Democracy?," *Review of African Political Economy* 19, n.54 (1992): 11–26.

6 Ioan M. Lewis, A *Modern History of Somalia: Nation And State In The Horn Of Africa*, Revised, Updated, (Routledge, 2019).

7 Edward A. Alpers, "On Becoming a British Lake: Piracy, Slaving, and British Imperialism in the Indian Ocean During the First Half of the Nineteenth Century," *Indian Ocean Slavery in the Age of Abolition*, (New Haven; London: Yale University Press, 2013), 45-58.

Robecchi-Brichetti, described in their reports the loss of centrality that the city had suffered within the coast following the arrival of Europeans in the Ocean.[8] Looking at the recent years in the country's history, the Italian colonial phase unfortunately stands out, representing a peculiar case. European colonialism arrived in Somalia as the country assumed an increasingly strategic position with the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. The British, French, and Italians all intervened in the country soon after the Berlin Congress. The invasion was fought by Somalis, who united religiously around the figure of Sayid Mohamed, showing strong unity and leading to a resistance deeply characterized by fundamental protection against infidels.[9] The British established a protectorate in the Northern part of the country, officially known as British Somaliland, while the Italians occupied the rest of the country. Their presence essentially lasted from 1892 to 1947, when the Treaty of Paris was signed, ending Italian colonial rule overall, after its defeat in the context of World War II.

The Italians arrived in Somalia at the end of the 19th century, initially with exploration trips with the aim of studying and learning about the territory, which was described as vast and sparsely populated, rich in agricultural and commercial potential[10]. Before the Italian occupation, the cities of Mogadishu, Brava, Berca, and Chisimaio were controlled by the Sultanate of Zanzibar. Italy was favored by Great Britain in negotiations with the Sultan as Germany also had expansionist ambitions on Somali territory. This led to the signing of a convention between Italy and Zanzibar in 1896, in which the Italian government obtained the right to administer politically and legally, the cities of Benadir in the name of the Sultan, in addition to collecting taxes and customs duties, in exchange for an annual rent of 160,000 rupees. Unlike Eritrea, initially, control of Somalia was entrusted to a private company, the Filonardi Company, following the English colonial model.[11] However, the Company did not have the desired effect and was accused of representing an economic loss to the state. Therefore, in 1905, the colony effectively came under the direct control of the Italian state, and the new legal order was completed with the law of 5 April 1908, which gave rise to "Italian Somalia". It is important to underline this shift, as it represented a significant transformation from an indirect rule of government, based on economic and commercial control, to a model of direct rule.[12]

This approach characterized Italian colonialism in the country and

8 Alberto Arecchi, "Robecchi-Brichetti e l'immagine di Mogadiscio," *Atti del Convegno su Luigi Robecchi-Bricchetti e la Somalia*, (Pavia: Camera di Commercio Industria Artigianato e Agricoltura, 1979), 74-77.

9 Ahmed Ali M Khayre, "Somalia: an Overview of the Historical and Current Situation," (April 27, 2016): Available at SSRN: https://ssrn.com/abstract=2771125.

10 Ali M. Ahad, "I peccati storici del colonialismo in Somalia," *Democrazia & Diritto* (2013).

11 Marco Pandolfo, "L' incontro con la seconda colonia, la Somalia," in *La Somalia coloniale: una storia ai margini della memoria italiana,* (Diacronie: Studi di Storia Contemporanea, 2013).

12 Ibid.

experienced a specific escalation with the new phase that commenced with the advent of the fascist regime in Italy. This regime brought its imperial aspirations to the continent, symbolically represented by the short period proclaimed as Italian East Africa (1936-41). Indeed, after the regime took power in 1922, the following year saw the appointment of Governor Cesare Maria De Vecchi to Somalia. Upon his arrival, he found only a portion of Somalia under the effective control of Italian power. The new governor subsequently initiated a policy of violence without attempting to understand the local reality. Specifically, the northern area of the country was indirectly governed by the sultan. In 1928, the year when the Cathedral was inaugurated, the governor's objectives, marked by constant use of repression and violence, led to the Italian military force gaining control of Somalia. This was the situation until 1947, with the Paris Treaty, when Italy formally lost every colony.[13]

Fast-forwarding to the end of formal Italian colonialism over Somalia, of critical importance is the widely unknown later return to Somalia of the Italians. Indeed, in 1949 the United Nations (UN) commissioned Italy to guide that process over a period of ten years, from 1950 to 1960. This period has passed in history as the AFIS and represents a unique case in the history of the continent, as the only UN protectorate given to a colonizing country over its former colony.[14] Justified on the basis of what the European narrative describes as a tentative attempt to facilitate the process of democratization of Somalia, it largely failed in its intention.[15]

Noteworthy, the matter of the UN Trusteeship is deeply critical and would need further evaluation, as it was mainly characterized as a second segment of the Italian colonization of Somalia. While this is not the place for such analysis, it should be remembered that the AFIS management has crucial responsibility in the economic destructuration of Somalia, as well as its political struggles.[16] Indeed, the AFIS was specifically characterized by a similar colonial administration in the country, in many cases the very same one, inheriting the administering fascist authorities who had already managed colonial Somalia. Consequently, they maintained the same structures and approaches undertaken during the previous colonial rule of Somalia.

To conclude this brief historical overview, it should be said that in the years that followed independence, Somalia experienced a period of peaceful democracy, characterized by clan allegiancies and a coalition government between the Somali Youth League (SYL, Southern-based) and the Somali

13 Ibid.

14 The acronym AFIS stands for Amministrazione Fiduciaria Italiana della Somalia, literally 'Italian Trust Administration'.

15 M. Reviglio Della Veneria, *The United Nations, Italy and Somalia: a 'sui generis' relation 1948-1969*, Master's thesis. (2015).

16 Alessandro Aruffo, Dossier Somalia. *Breve storia dal mandato italiano all'intervento Onu 1948-1993*, (Roma: Datanews, 1994).

National League (SNL, Northern-based). This period of peace was interrupted by the assassination of President Cabdirashiid Cali Sherma arke, in October 1969, who had become president after the elections at the beginning of the year: a government crisis followed and was interrupted by a coup staged by the military, which led General Mohamed Siad Barre to become head of the government.

In this context, Mogadishu underwent a structural symbolic nationalization process, characterized by the appropriation of colonial monuments. Mohamed has described how this process led to changing the meaning of those colonial monuments and symbols in a re-defined way that could serve the memory of the colonized. A progressive reappropriation of such symbols started during the latest part of the AFIS and led to an anticolonial restructuration, or abandonment, of those monuments and spaces that had become central to the colonial administration of the country.[17]

The problematics of Italian colonial art

The structures of a city deeply influence the way its inhabitants live within it. That is the case in Mogadishu as well, where the urban architectures of Italian colonialism strongly shaped the city and its population.[18] The origins of Mogadishu are not entirely clear, although some estimates trace its foundation to the tenth or twelfth centuries. The city was an active commercial center on the Oriental Coast of the continent way before the Italian arrival. Relevantly enough, Mogadishu's port was participating in regional and inter-regional politics and commerce, respectively with Eastern Africa the Arabian Peninsula, and the Indian Ocean.[19] Highlighting this element is fundamental in order to put into perspective the matters addressed in this paper, and proceed in understanding the issues it addresses and the perspectives it wishes to share with its readers.

The aim of this research is not only to invite a serious debate on the politicization of urban art but also to build a narrative that can show colonialism on art in the occupied country. For some years, in fact, all over the world statues, mausoleums, and iconic monuments representing figures or themes recalling colonialism were deeply criticized and became primary objectives of the so-called cancel culture and its relative debate. Iconic in this sense what happened in Bristol, where activists of the movement decided to throw into the sea the statue of Edward Colston, a slave trader in the Atlantic,[20] or the choice of South Africa to remove the statues of Cecil Rhodes, British explorer, and politician.

17 Iman Mohamed, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," *Interventions* (2023): 1-23.

18 Susan Schulman and Anna C Rader, "Mogadishu," *The RUSI Journal* 157, no. 4 (2012): 28-40.

19 Mohamed, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," 1-23.

20 Samuel J. Richards, "Historical Revision in Church," *Anglican and Episcopal History* 89, no. 3 (2020): 252-254.

In contrast to the ongoing efforts to raise awareness about the problematic representation of the colonial figure in art, Italy appears to lack an acceptance of responsibility for the role Italians played in perpetuating colonial politics.[21] Specifically, there is a notable absence of a comprehensive debate on the case of the occupation of Somalia in Italy. This poses a challenge for a country that prides itself on not actively participating in the colonization of Africa yet fails to acknowledge its own history of perpetuating numerous racist policies. Indeed, there is a crucial tendency to generalize Italian colonialism as a Fascist event, and colonialism is not critically discussed in the country. Generally, present the phenomenon superimposing it on that of the fascist regime, for this reason, the role of AFIS is still poorly recognized by the Italian population, although the war and fascism were over for 5 years, in Somalia remained many fascist rulers even in democratic times. The topographical map of Italian colonialism shows how much the Italian territorial space is still impregnated with colonialism. This brief note is useful to highlight to what extent the state's colonialism has yet to be thoroughly critically understood and condemned. In particular, in Italy, there are still several art forms that recall and celebrate the colonial period. Among these is the mausoleum in honor of Rodolfo Graziani in Affile (Rome), an illustrious figure of Italian fascism and guilty of the greatest massacres of Italian colonialism in Ethiopia. Also in Milan, there is the statue of the writer Indro Montanelli who, during the occupation, married a 12-year-old girl, and the list would still be long.[22]

The construction of Cathedral in Mogadishu and the redefinition of Urban Space

The process of discussing the role of Italian colonial art has evolved into a broader examination that aims to understand the problematic aspects of constructing monuments through the exertion of power, which resulted in the alienation and displacement of the local population. In doing so, the choice of the Cathedral is motivated by the authors of this paper for three reasons: religious, architectonic-spatial, and political.

The construction work began when the Fascist regime took power in Italy. After the march on Rome in 1922 and the seizure of power by the fascist regime, Cesare Maria De Vecchi was sent to Mogadishu. It faced a part of Somali territory under government control and part under the control of nomadic populations. De Vecchi immediately regained the portion of the territory not under the control of the regime and inaugurated a policy characterized by violence, lack of scruples, and poor understanding of local reality. In addition to these dynamics, one of the aims of the regime was to subject the Somali population to Italian religious culture and customs.

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21 Alessandra Ferrini and Simone Frangi, "La responsabilità di un impero," in Flash Art (November, 2017): Available at https://flash---art.it/article/la-responsabilita-di-un-impero/.

22 https://umap.openstreetmap.fr/it/map/viva-zerai_519378#6/41.508/11.096

To this end, urban spaces were redefined with the construction of numerous Italian churches and schools where Catholic missionaries taught.[23] Furthermore, in Mogadishu, there were 28 mosques, many of which were destroyed with the arrival of colonialism.[24]

It is here that the construction of the Cathedral in Mogadishu was planned, mostly to Italianize the Somali capital, where the administration was based. Interestingly, its construction is also closely related to the missionary policies adopted by the kingdom of Italy both during the fascist

FIG. 1 Imagine of the Cathedral belonging to the Iconographic Fund "Carlo Pedrini" and provided by Biblioteca di storia moderna e contemporanea (BSMC).

regime and in the previous one. Indeed, the Italian colonization of Somalia was strongly linked to the Catholic religion, as commonly occurred with European imperialism in the continent and elsewhere. To add an interesting element to this point, it should be noted that in the first twenty years of Italian-state presence in Somalia, from 1904 to 1924, such missionary policies were not particularly successful. It was specifically in 1924 that there was a significant turning point, with the arrival of Father Gabriele Perlo in the colony. From that moment on, missionary efforts took a new direction, with the spread of schools and hospitals run by missionaries throughout the city. Consequently, all Italian schools in Somalia were run by Catholic missionaries.[25] The construction of such a massive Cathedral in the heart of Mogadishu should be seen in the foreground of these events. In March 1928 the Cathedral was inaugurated, and Father Gabriele Perlo received episcopal consecration as to add to this massive Christianization process in Somalia. These elements are critical to the understanding of the spatial

23 Marco Pandolfo, "Dal primo difficile dopoguerra alla politica coloniale fascista," *La Somalia coloniale: una storia ai margini della memoria italiana*, (Diacronie: Studi di Storia Contemporanea, 2013).

24 Nuredin Hagi Scikei, *Exploring the Old Stone Town of Mogadishu*, (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2017), 2.

25 "Le missioni cattoliche nell'Africa Orientale," *L' Oltremare*, (December 1927): 27-28.

and religious colonization enacted by Italy in Somalia.

Indeed, to support the missionary goal, Italian colonialism redefined the spaces and built, among other things, religious monuments. The construction of the Cathedral began in December 1923 and lasted for five years.

FIG. 2 Image of The Construction of the Cathedral, belonging to the Iconographic Fund "Carlo Pedrini" and provided by Biblioteca di storia moderna e contemporanea (BSMC).

The cathedral was designed by the architect Count Antonio Vendone di Cortemiglia and was strongly wanted by the governor of Somalia Cesare Maria de Vecchi. Inspired to Norman and Gothic architecture,[26] its design included a porch with three arches to give an impression of speed and elegance and two towers to manifest solidity and strength. Inside the cathedral worked famous artists of the regime, such as Pietro Camarini, Gregorio Lazzarini, and Cesare Biscarra. Notably, the latter was responsible for the sculpture of the Madonna della Consolata, after which the cathedral was named.[27] The work was mainly carried out by Abyssinian and Mejeerteen prisoners, although historian Iman Mohamed has emphasized how the matter is complex and there is no certainty in this regard.[28] It is important to highlight that the structure of the cathedral is very reminiscent of the Norman style present in Cefalù, and this choice is not accidental. Indeed, the Normans had conquered Sicily after defeating the Arabs in 1091: curiously, the regime chose to represent the symbol of the Christian reconquest building the Cathedral in Mogadishu.

The connection between the conquest of Sicily and the colonization of Mogadishu sheds light on the significance of the drive to westernize the urban landscape. To analyze this, it is valuable to explore the construction

26 Mia Fuller, "Italian Colonial Architecture and City Planning in North and East Africa," *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of African History* (2020).

27 "Le missioni cattoliche nell'Africa Orientale," 27-28.

28 Mohamed, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," 1-23.

of the Cathedral through three lenses: religious, architectonic-spatial, and political. In terms of the religious dimension, it is essential to recognize Somalia as a predominantly Muslim country deeply steeped in its religious heritage and traditions. Instances of Islamophobia, prevalent in Western societies, particularly Italy, have fostered a perception of Christian religious superiority. In this context, the construction of the Cathedral for the regime represents the triumph over Islam and the imposition of foreign occupation in the heart of the city. The second aspect focuses on the physical and spatial repercussions of erecting the Cathedral. The construction not only displaced the Somali people from their customary living spaces but also transformed the area into a tool for settlers to exert control. This shift signifies the appropriation of power, replacing the indigenous people's decision-making authority over communal spaces with infrastructure catering to the colonizers' needs. The urban landscape, once governed by the local population, underwent a reshaping aligned with the preferences of the colonizers. The last critical aspect concerns the instrumentalization of religion for imperial politics, a tactic not limited to the colonization of Africa but also evident in using religion to rationalize political decisions. Placing a Cathedral at the center of the capital in a predominantly Muslim country should not be solely perceived as meeting the faithful's needs. Instead, it serves as a demonstration of Italian power, highlighting that political decisions and authority firmly reside in their hands. This strategic placement in the city center, traditionally the focal point, reinforces a divisive narrative wherein the Italian (Western) presence occupies the center, relegating the Somali (Others) to the periphery. In summary, the construction of the Cathedral in Mogadishu reflects a multi-faceted strategy employed by Italian societies to legitimize their presence through religious, spatial, and political dimensions, ultimately perpetuating racist policies.

For this reason, the cathedral for the regime was considered an important Catholic temple in the Indian Ocean and the largest cathedral in East Africa.[29] Notwithstanding its religious symbolism, the cathedral was part of the physical colonization of Somalia. At this juncture, this element should be specifically considered in its complexity. Indeed, the building has long had a definitive role in the cityscape of Mogadishu, reflecting importance with its symbolic presence[30] which was a "demonstration of colonial power as imagined by De Vecchi: it served as an emblem of this new era in which Italy's legitimate and effective power in Somalia Italiana could no longer be questioned, above all by the colonized".[31]

During the fascist regime, the main colonial urban centers underwent a

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29 Roland Marchal, "Mogadiscio tra rovine e globalizzazione," *Afriche e Orienti* (1999): 20-21.

30 Rashid Ali, "The Making of a Modern African City," in *Mogadishu: Lost Moderns*, (London: Mosaic Rooms. 2014).

31 Mohamed, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," 8-9.

reorganization aimed at creating a clear definition of places and buildings of political control. The symbols of fascist domination were carefully concentrated in focal points, such as urban centers, squares, and places of particular importance, creating a very strong symbolic value in the entire urban system. The architectural styles used were specially chosen to represent the symbols of power, unequivocally highlighting the signs of fascist domination in urban spaces.[32]

In 1929, the regime planned the implementation of the first zoning plan to stimulate further building activities. This involved redefining the two existing neighborhoods, Xamar Weyne and Shangaani, to make room for a tertiary and commercial center. In this process, the indigenous population was not considered: habitations and structures were disrupted, and barracks were built on the outskirts of Mogadishu.[33] The development of a town planning plan was crucial as it aimed to shape Mogadishu according to the model of a European city. The colonial architectural style emerged during a period of significant transformation in European urbanism. The ideas of prominent figures such as late nineteenth-century French urban planner Hausmann and early twentieth-century architect and urban planner Le Corbusier revolutionized the urban landscape. Hausmann's construction of Parisian boulevards and his innovative approach to urban security redefined the relationship between civil and military engineering.[34] Le Corbusier, known for his theories on modern cities, influenced Italian architects through the CIAM (International Congresses of Modern Architecture) organization, leading to the development of Italian Rationalism.[35] This movement embraced functionalism, emphasizing that each building should fully embody its intended purpose while drawing inspiration from Roman and Renaissance architecture to symbolize the power of the regime. Following this architectural trend, within the center of Mogadishu, the architectural work, including the destruction of Scingani neighborhoods by the Italians, has given rise to a prominent avenue named Avenue Regina Elena. This work bears a remarkable resemblance to the realization of Corso Umberto I in Naples

FIG. 3 Image of The Cathedral taken from the website "Mogadishu: Images from the past" (https://mogadishuimages.wordpress.com/) and taken by Rick Davies.

32 Vittoria Capresi, "Eredità e permanenze del colonialismo italiano in Libia. Continuità negli interventi urbani/architettura/simbolo," *Maghreb et sciences sociales* 3, (2012), 207-19.

33 Guido Corni, *La Somalia Italiana*. Vol. II., (Milano: Editoriale arte e storia, 1937), 153-173.

34 Richard Sennett, *Costruire e abitare: etica per la città*, (Milano: Feltrinelli, 2018), 40-50.

35 Mark Swenarton, "Rationality and Rationalism: the Theory and Practice of Site Planning in Modern Architecture 1905-1930," *AA Files*, no. 4 (1983): 54-56.

and other architectural projects in European cities.[36]

These interventions not only presented themselves as embodiments of modernity, a crucial concept for legitimizing the regime in Italy but also served to legitimize imperialist policies in the colonies. Notable examples include the Cathedral, the Bin Queer Palace, the Palazzo Comando Truppe, and the Hotel Croce del Sud, all of which perfectly exemplify the urban style prevalent in Italy during that period. From the town-planning project, one can observe how the street names in the city underwent changes. Examples include Corso Vittorio Emanuele III, Via San Francesco d'Assisi, Lungomare B. Mussolini, Corso Regina Elena, and others.[37] These names were chosen to honor prominent politicians of the kingdom of Italy while also intersecting with the names of Italian Catholic saints.

It is noteworthy that even today, St. Francis of Assisi symbolizes the Christian protector of Italy and is depicted in various representations within the cathedral in Mogadishu. By contextualizing these concepts,

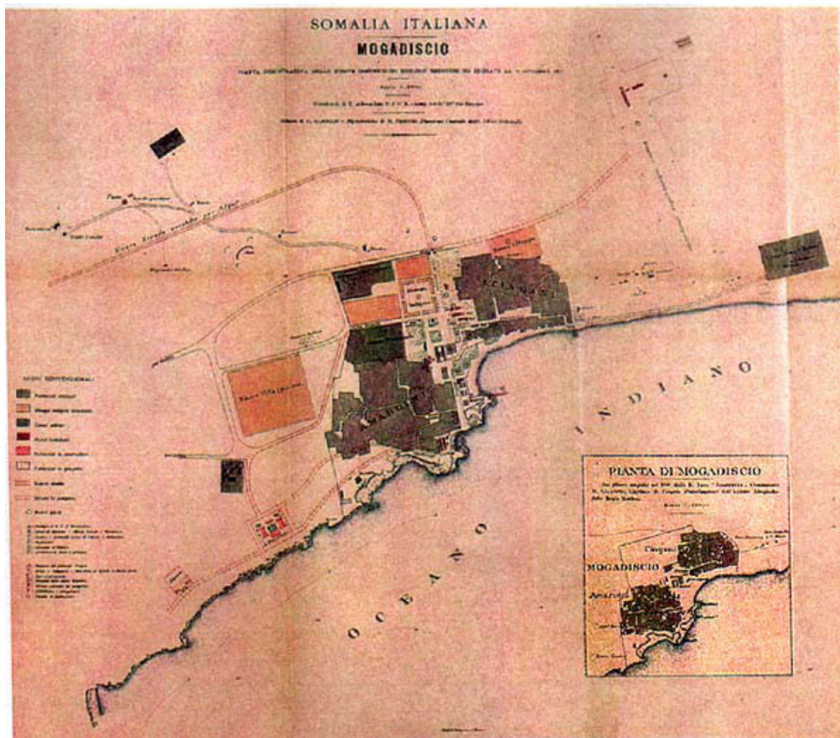

FIG. 3 Map image of Mogadishu during the Fascist occupation, taken from the website "Mogadishu: Images from the past" (https://mogadishuimages.wordpress.com/) and taken by Rick Davies.

we gain a deeper understanding of the structure of Italian colonial architecture and the fact that each building was intended as a manifestation and symbol of power. Consequently, every reimagined element of the

36 Emilio Distretti and Alessandro Petti, "The Afterlife of Fascist Colonial Architecture: A Critical Manifesto," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 16, no. 2 (2019): 47-58.

37 In note our English translation: Vittorio Emanuele III Avenue; St. Francis of Assisi Street; Regina Elena Avenue Mussolini Waterfront.

city assumes significance and conveys a political message. Urban art becomes a powerful tool for the promotion of colonial ideas.[38]

Concluding remarks: it is time to critically evaluate skewed points of view

Evaluating the choice of making urban art specifically religious needs attention. Indeed, Somalia has long been a widely Muslim country. On the contrary, Italy has long been a deeply Catholic country. Thereby, during colonial times, the colonized space was partially divided between Islamic and Christian monuments. Nevertheless, as many may be thinking, Italian colonialism was completely disrespectful and skewed. These authors unfortunately keep reading articles and papers which do not criticize the role that Italy had within colonialism (or do so, but poorly). While the calls for terminating the legitimization of the myth of the "Italiani brava gente" have been multiple, such a myth is still broadly common.[39]

When approaching these themes, we asked ourselves if, in today's times, colonial monuments should be disrupted or kept as forms of heritage and reminders of what happened. While it is certainly not our place to provide an answer for Somalia, where most of the colonial monuments were disrupted in favor of Somali art and architecture after the end of the AFIS,[40] we can surely hope to stimulate such debate in our readers' minds. At this point, the peculiarity of the Somali situation, with the abovementioned post-colonial destruction of colonial art in favor of Somali culture[41] and the civil war that started at the end of the 1980s, should be remembered when thinking about these themes. On the other hand, what two young Italian and Europeans can say in conclusion to this brief analysis is that Italy, as a former colonial power, needs to acknowledge, understand and critically evaluate its role during colonialism. Furthermore, it is about time that this Italian experience is taught in schools and publicly criticized: it is surely time to eradicate the Italian monuments that celebrate the country's colonialism as a heroic event.

38 Mia Fuller, "Building Power: Italy's Colonial Architecture and Urbanism, 1923-1940," *Cultural Anthropology* 3, no. 4 (1988): 484.

39 Angelo Del Boca, *Italiani, brava gente?: un mito duro a morire* (Vicenza: BEAT, 2022).

40 Mohamed, "Colonial Amnesia and the Material Remains of Italian Colonialism in Mogadishu," 1-23.

41 *Ibid*.

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MISCELLANEA

The Psychogeographic Fotoromanzo as an Urban Affective Mapping Practice: Notes on Ralph Rumney's The leaning Tower of Venice

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ABSTRACT
Psychogeography, a method of reality analysis incubated in the 1950s by the Situationist International, was presented early on as a methodology capable of unraveling the precise effects of the geographic environment on the psychic behavior of individuals, paving the way for a dialogue between geography and psychology. Ralph Rumney, drawing from the Situationist lesson, translated his research on the city of Venice into a narrative form, choosing the fotoromanzo as an innovative form of representation. Retaining the peculiarities of this type of narrative, Rumney aimed at rendering the analysis of the city of Venice into a topographical condensate of affective mapping, drawing from the subversive potential of the psychogeographic method.

KEYWORDS
Psychogeography; Ralph Rumney; Walking practice; Urban mapping; Psychogeographic dérive

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Introduction

In the last issue of "Potlatch" (1957), the Lettrist International (LI) announced the publication of the *Guide Psychogéographique de Venise* by the British comrade Ralph Rumney, the president of the London Psychogeographical Committee.

The drafting of the text, discussed during a meeting in Cosio d'Arroscia, Alba (Italy), was to include a psychogeographical reading of the city of Venice, a place that was particularly suitable for this purpose - on a par with Paris and Amsterdam - since it offered various opportunities for disorientation.[1]

The text Debord mentions in "Potlatch", and which will never be published in the Situationist International (SI) bulletin, will cost Rumney the expulsion from the core of the SI, which announces its loss in a kind of obituary complete with photo: "*Venise a vaincu Ralph Rumney*".[2]

> Ancient explorers knew a high percentage of losses at the price of which knowledge of objective geography was arrived at. One had to expect to see casualties among the new researchers, explorers of social space [...]. Rumney, therefore, has just disappeared [...]. So the Venetian jungle was the strongest and closes in on a young man, full of life and promise, who is lost, who dissolves among our multiple memories.[3]

The text, despite the author's delay and expulsion from the movement, would be completed and distributed to the public in 1959 through the multi-issue publication of ARK magazine, edited by the Royal College of Arts in London.[4-5] The title of Rumney's work, however, was to be *The Leaning Tower of Venice*,[6] a reference to the photo of the leaning tower featured on

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1 Ralph Rumney. *The Consul*, trans. Malcolm Imrie (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002): 47

2 *Internationale Situationniste* 1958-1969 (Paris: Editions Champ-Lybre, 1975) : 28

3 Ibid., 28. Translated from French by the author.

4 The history of *The Leaning Tower of Venice* is traversed by a series of unfortunate events that nevertheless allowed the publisher Silverbridge to release a reprint of the work in 2002. As Irma del Monte explains, the materials prepared by Rumney for publication and sent to ARK magazine were fragmented and destined for two different issues (24 and 25). However, there was a change in editorial direction and some of the materials sent by Rumney not only were published in random order, but also lost. In 1989, during a travelling exhibit of the Situationists' work, Rumney noticed that the original boards were displayed, and he asked a photographer to take some photos. To this day, the only documents that testify to the artist's work are those photos taken during the London exhibition, forming the materials for the 2002 re-edition of Rumney's text. See: Del Monte, "Ralph Rumney and his derive in the 1950s".

5 Ralph Rumney, *The Leaning tower of Venice* (Paris: Silverbridge, 2002).

6 In *The Consul*, Rumney argued that his aim was not to offer yet another guide to Venice and that the actual title of his oeuvre was *The Leaning Tower of Venice*. Furthermore, the artist stated that the practice of detourning photographs, and in particular portraits, that was extensively used by the Situationists was suggested by him during the SI first meeting. «You cannot fail to notice that the SI made a lot of detournements of photo novels. I suggested all that. What is called The Guide isn't a guide at all [...] In Cosio, I think I talked a lot about photo novels and the possibilities for the SI's publishing detourned photos [...] and Guy's irony was to use it in the first issue of the journal to make public my expulsion, because my proposal in Cosio, which was adopted and quickly forgotten, was that each member of the SI should present themselves in the first issue with a little note preceded by an anthropometric photo, a mug shot». See: Rumney, *The Consul*,

the front page of his *fotoromanzo*.

In this respect, the compelling element of Rumney's work lies not only in the methodology of data collection—specifically, psychogeographical dérive—but also in the way the work is presented to the public.

Rumney's initial intention was to shoot scenes with a videocamera, but having only a Rolleiflex at his disposal, he decided to turn his project into a *fotoromanzo*.[7] This editorial format fascinated Rumney, who decided to realize his *dérive* precisely in the city of Venice, in order to offer a de-spectacularized view of the urban fabric through alternative and unprecedented routes away from the banks of the Grand Canal.[8]

In this paper, we will explore the psychogeographical methodology of the *dérive* and its relevance in the context of Rumney's text *The leaning tower of Venice*. Drawing from these insights, we will examine how the psychogeographical method and more specifically the dérive, can be interpreted as an affective[9] and subversive mapping practice. To this regard, not only aimed Situationist psychogeography at developing a scientific toolkit to study and represent cartographically the experiences provoked by space, but also intended to unveil the boundaries and the affective junctions that traditional cartography was unable to read.

Elements of situationist psychogeography

The origin of the term psychogeography should be traced back to the mid-1950s, when Guy Debord, a leading figure in the Letterist International (LI) and later the Situationist International (SI), dedicated a few pages to defining this notion. The term, as recalled by LI members, was suggested by an unlettered Kabyle man they met in a Parisian bar[10] and immediately used to identify a new method of analysis based on the relationship between the individual psyche and the environment.

Specifically, Debord wrote: "*la psychogéographie se proposerait l'étude des lois exactes et des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment*

47-49.

7 Rumney, The Consul, 51.

8 «The plan was to create a sketch which would show the areas where no one went, far from the Grand Canal. The idea was to de-spectacularize Venice by suggesting unknown routes through it». Rumney, *The Consul*, 47.

9 The term 'affective', here, is not used in reference to the emotional or affective geographies part of the cultural turn in geography, which on their side, has resurged an interest in psychogeographies. Cfr. Nat O' Grady, "Geographies of Affect," *Oxford Bibliographies* (2021). In particular, what distances the psychogeographical method from these disciplinary offshoots, apart from the historical hiatus and literature reference (consider, with regard to affective geography, the influence of Deleuzian readings of Spinoza), is the political substratum guiding the practice. Psychogeography, is a tool that not only aims at reconstructing space representations from evoked sensations, but above all is a political claim. The scope of the Situationniste International (SI) is not just producing an alternative reading and mapping, but to establish a science capable of guiding a revolution of everyday life and space.

10 Guy Debord, "Introduzione a una critica della geografia urbana," in *Ecologia e Psicogeografia* (Eleuthera: Milano, 2020, 1955): 11

aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus”.[11]

Following Debord, psychogeography was concerned with studying the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment on individuals and behaviour. In this regard, psychogeography brought together two disciplinarily distant terrains: that of geography, which “accounts for the determining action of general natural forces, such as soil composition, or climatic regimes, on the economic formations of a society”, and that of psychology, which seeks to reason about the affective behaviour of individuals transiting through urban space.

The analysis conducted through psychogeography proposed the development and use of exact scientific laws that would study and represent in cartographical form all those experiences and behaviours provoked by space in the individuals. It was a matter of drawing “a new topography that, instead of depicting the geographical limits of the territory, represented in the form of ‘lines of circulation’ the psychic limits that a living environment imposes on the affective behaviours of the inhabitants”.[12]

Specifically, the uniqueness of the psychogeographical method, and more generally of the situationists’ approach, lied in recognizing a close relationship between space, power and individuals. In this sense, space was defined as matter ordered by the political.

Psychogeography was equipped with a series of tools implemented to draw images of space that were not only capable of subsuming alienating human living conditions, but also of enacting non-alienated forms of space occupation.

Generally speaking, psychogeographical practices were characterized by a deep sense of playfulness through which the Situationists sought to overcome the process of trivialization of everyday life.[13] Gilles Ivain wrote: “we are bored in the city, one has to work hard to still discover mysteries on public street signs, the last stage of humour and poetry”.[14]

Among the proposals to chase away boredom: that of breaking into the floors of demolished houses during the night hours; hitchhiking through the city of Paris during a transport strike; entering the dungeons of the catacombs during the hours when they are closed to the public; exploring the tunnels of the subways after the last trains have passed through, strolling through the gardens at night; in the dark and fitting the street lamps with switches so that the illumination is available to passers-by.[15]

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11 *International Situationniste*, 19.

12 Ibid., 19. Translated by the author.

13 Merlin Coverley, *Psychogeography* (Herts: Pocket essentials, 2006): 6

14 Gilles Ivain, *Formulario per un nuovo urbanismo*, trans. Carmine Mangone (Maldoror Press, 2013): 9. Translated by the author.

15 Gianfranco Marelli, *L’amara vittoria del situazionismo. Storia critica dell’Internationale Situationniste 1957-1972* (Milano: Mimesis, 2017): 87. Translated by the author.

The reference to the ludic character and playful component of human activities was not trivial; rather, it was closely anchored in a theoretical background ranging from a critique of everyday life and the concept of youth (refined especially by Isidore Isou's Lettrism), to an explicit reference to Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens.[16] Debord himself - along with Constant - frequently quoted the Dutch author, stating that this would "demonstrate that culture, in its primitive stages, takes on the features of a game and develops under the forms and in the environment of play".[17]

Huizinga argued that play is an innate activity in human beings and, with the aim of understanding whether this tendency belongs exclusively to certain cultures or characterizes the whole of humankind, he ended up finding it not only in all the cultures under analysis, but also in the animal world. For Huizinga - and for the situationists - play represented a concrete proof that human beings are not exclusively limited to the rational sphere.

Dérive as walking method

Dérive was defined as "a technique of hasty passage through various environments"[18] whose meaning was inextricably linked to its psychogeographical nature - the effects of which the subject will lucidly recognize during its enactment (and to the affirmation of that playful-constructive behaviour we alluded to in the previous paragraphs).

Precisely because it is not aleatory, but rather the result of a theoretical instance, *dérive* differed sharply from the classical notions of: travel, walk, surrealist walking and even *flânerie*. If walking can be traced back to a disinterested type of movement where the body is dragged through space for the purpose of enjoying a beautiful view, the *dérive* is instead attentive, active, and willing to lucidly take in the stimuli that come from traversing urban landscape.

The *dérive* exercise enabled to detect the articulations of the modern city because it recognizes its units of affective environment by locating them geographically. It traced their main axes of passage, exits and defences by lucidly identifying their junctions.

However, *dérive* did not only represent a tool for conducting a pure analysis of the affective status of the city. Rather, it announced and *denounced* the way urban space reflected the order of the dominant society, suggesting that space directs the affections and behaviours of its inhabitants. The great discovery made through this methodology was the understanding

16 Johan Huizinga. *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture*. (United Kingdom: Routledge, 1998).

17 Guy Debord, "L'architettura e il gioco," in *Ecologia e Psicogeografia* (Milano: Eleuthera, 2020): 7. Translated by the author.

18 *International Situationniste*, 19. Translated by the author.

of the influence of space on the daily lives of individuals.

Situationists, then, not only became aware of the psychogeographical relevance of the urban fabric, but also sensed that by changing its form and functions the psychogeographical outcome could be completely disrupted. If the spatial representations ordered by the dominant ideology could influence the daily lives of individuals, why not to adopt a strategy to change the form and functions of space from the human being's assumptions of fulfilment and desire?

As Coverley wrote, the peculiarity of the psychogeographical practice was its style of execution: walking.[19] Psychogeography, in fact, was an urban affair, and since the metropolitan environment is increasingly hostile to pedestrian movement, not only from the point of view of mobility efficiency, but also from the perspective of urbanistic propensity to organize space, it is inevitable that walking becomes a subversive practice of occupying space.

For Situationists, walking through the city represented a challenge to the spatial configuration of organized capitalism since not only it allowed for self-determination of one's movement within representations of space, but also enabled to bypass marked routes and explore areas on the margins inaccessible by other means of transportation.[20]

Walking allows greater expression and freedom of the body, not only in terms of movement, which becomes spontaneous and follow a rhythm[21] dictated by the subject, but also in terms of autonomy in choosing which route to take.

Moreover, walking enables to unleash the repressed energies through the exercise of a physical practice and, in this sense, is closely connected with the enhancement of the playful and childish aspect that characterizes all psychogeographical practices.

For Coverley: "walking becomes a bound with psychogeography's characteristic political opposition to authority".[22]

Discussing situationist psychogeography as a perspective on walking method involves examining its theoretical and practical foundations. It not only acknowledges the body in motion as a key tool for analyzing and critiquing space from the perspective of the mobile subject, but also views walking as an active and transformative practice.

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19 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 6.

20 Regarding psychogeography and marginality, it is interesting to note that the derivations of psychogeography since the 1990s have distinguished by a focus on marginal and peripheral spaces (e.g. Nick Papadimitrou, William G. Niederland). A striking example is Iain Sinclair's work on London's M25 (*London Orbital*, 2002). See: Tina Richardson. *Walking Inside Out. Contemporary British Psychogeography* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2015): 6

21 On the importance of rhythms for everyday life, see: Henri Lefebvre, *Éléments de rythmanalyse. Introduction à la connaisance des rythmes* (Paris: Éditions Syllepse, 1992).

22 Coverley, *Psychogeography*, 10.

According to the situationists, the moving body could perceive how the environment affects mental states and identify the forces influencing its psychological conditions. In this context, psychogeographical practices could enable researchers to create human-scale cartographies that awaken the senses and sensations stifled by functionalist and overly rationalizing urban planning.

Psychogeographical maps and dérive

> "The exploration of a fixed spatial field entails establishing bases and calculating directions of penetration. It is here that the study of maps comes in".[23]

According to Debord, the role of maps in the psychogeographical practice was that of supporting the drift design within a city, especially when those who implement it are unfamiliar with its geography. However, maps were primarily used with the purpose of redrawing and improving them, given that what was learned during the drifting should foresee the establishment of brand-new boundaries and psychogeographical junctions that traditional cartography was unable to glimpse within space.

With respect to the topic of maps, drift aimed at filling this gap and served not only as a tool for reading, but for translating the psychogeographical effects of walking onto an objective medium.

The creation of the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) represented the first attempt to create a detourned cartography from the collage of some cutouts of Turgot's perspective plan, an image that was intended to represent the classical conception of the unitary city and whose three-dimensionality was reminiscent of touristic maps with city monuments in axonometry.[24]

The choice to make a folding map precisely from Turgot's perspective was not accidental; rather, this was conceived as a real guidebook, one that invited readers to get lost by following the red arrows indicating access and escape routes from the *unite d'ambiances* (depicted as floating plaques) and previously identified and delimited through psychogeographical surveys.

> "Opening this bizarre city guide, we find a Paris exploded into pieces, a city whose unity is shattered and in which we can only recognise fragments of the historic centre floating in a void space".[25]

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23 *Internationale Situationniste*, 19.

24 The *Plan de Turgot*, made between 1734 and 1739, was a bird's-eye view plan of the city of Paris ordered by Michel Etienne Turgot - head of the Paris municipality - and made by topographer Louis Bretez. More than a plan, it was a perspective in which houses, hotels, garden squares, boulevards, churches, etc., were visible at a glance making the image enjoyable to the reader. The instance that prompted Turgot's request stemmed from the need to endow the city with a perspective view that could be compared with that of other capitals. See: Francesco Careri, *Constant: New Babylon, una città nomade* (Torino: Testo&Immagine, 2001): 67

25 Careri, *Constant*, 67. [Translation from Italian is mine]

As Careri suggested, the intent not to sketch out complete paths, but rather to replace the transitions between one unit of environment and another with coloured arrows, lies in the desire to make those spaces significant interstices of potential and imaginary drifts, in an urban space made up of voids and solids. Repeatedly, the "drift is transformed from a reading methodology to a tool for imaginative construction of infinite possible cities. The erratic path not only has an analytical role, but also that of synthesis; it is an action that is offered as a true architecture of lived space".[26]

The white space where the *unité d'ambiances* islets float symbolizes a defined territory that encloses individuals' spaces of wondering, free from the ambiguities of the outside world. In a way, these white areas equip readers to navigate space autonomously and intuitively, encouraging them to assert their own intent.[27]

Although the theory of *dérive* occupied a fundamental part within situationist practices, the number of psychogeographical maps is quite small. An interesting example, however, is the map reproduced in Abdelhafid Khatib's *Essai de description psychogéographique des Halles*.[28] The map, accompanied by an essay, traced what the author calls «the inner currents» of LEs Halles district by showing the lines of communication and barrages that occupy the streets. Rather than describing the path of a possible drift or implementation, the essay offered an analytical reading of the neighbourhood, divided into zones, and catalogued from affections: "this area is depressing", "this area is, at night, industrious and gay", another had "a bizarre and undefined character".

The psychogeographical fotoromanzo

To get into the merits of Ralph Rumney's psychogeographical city-mapping oeuvre in Venice, we need to consider some unusual features of his work.

Regarding the form of the text, as stated by the author, Rumney took inspiration from the pattern of the *fotoromanzo* - an all-Italian invention of the 1950s - which encapsulated a form of storytelling intended primarily for female audiences. In this genre, characters pictures (usually posing actors) were juxtaposed to vignettes featuring dialogues or brief descriptions by the narrator's voice.

About the *fotoromanzo*, Mario Dajelli wrote that this was the heir of the

26 See: Careri, *Constant*, 68. To Careri, a key aspect of early psychogeographical maps is that they represent the city experienced as a liquid space. The drift would cause a kind of disconnection between the islets that make up the map and the negotiated tensions/affections of the unite d'ambiance allow the neighbourhoods/continents to assume a magnetic autonomy transforming them into plaques susceptible to collisions, landslides, and fractures.

27 Michel De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano* (Roma: Edizioni Lavoro, 2001): 199.

28 *Internationale Situationniste*, 16.

French feuilleton, a 19th Century literature format which enjoyed great popularity both among the public and by influential writers of the period. The *feuilletons*, as would later be the case of the *fotoromanzo*, were published serially in newspapers and intended for a mainstream and popular public.[29] It is interesting to note that, fourteen years after the appearance of the *feuilleton*, because of its wide success among the subaltern classes, it was condemned detrimental to public order. For this reason, a tax was imposed by the government making its publication practically impossible.[30]

Antonio Gramsci wrote: "the *feuilleton* replaces (and at the same time encourages) the reverie of the folk man, it is a true daydreaming".[31] In this framework, the *fotoromanzo* - direct heir of the ancient *feuilletons* - fostered and satisfied a need for escapism and imagination widespread especially among the subordinated classes.

The image popularized through the 6x6 format[32] (typical of the pictures used for creating *fotoromanzo* contents) despite representing stereotypical, banal, and artificial portraits and sets, could stimulate the *reverie*, precisely through the vividness of the photographs, suggesting that it could be, at least in appearance - on that page that could be touched by hand and so close to the vivid colours of reality – accomplished and fulfilled.[33]

By choosing a popular editorial form, disdained by upper classes due to the narrative and storyline poor quality (the *fotoromanzo* plot is primarily about sentimental affairs), Rumney performed a *detournement*[34] of the genre. This way, the Italian *fotoromanzo*, from a frivolous editorial form, was turned into an effective storytelling and scientific research tool.

The romantic component linked to affections was kept and even stressed, since it was precisely through this very form that the author succeeded in effectively conveying the results of his psychogeographical drifts. These, indeed, involved nothing more than: "the study of the exact laws and precise effects of the geographical environment which, consciously or unconsciously, act directly on the affective behaviour of individuals".[35]

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29 ibid., 171.

30 ibid., 192.

31 Antonio Gramsci, "Letteratura e vita nazionale," in *Opere di Antonio Gramsci* (Torino: Einaudi, 1950): 141. Translated by the author.

32 Rumney admits a certain infatuation with geometric shapes and in particular with the square one. He recounts that he found himself in San Marco, Venice and was fascinated not so much by the architecture of the buildings or the view, but rather by the shapes that had been chosen to pave the square's floors. He stated: «squares, Polaroids, for example-have always fascinated me. A lot of my paintings are square. I still dream of making square films». See: Rumney, The Consul, 147.

33 Mario Dajelli, "Fotoromanzo, invenzione italiana," in *Le tecniche dell'immagine* (Roma: Armando, 1975): 187.

34 According to the definition, *détournement* is a form of estrangement from the given reality. Specifically, the term is the shorthand for '*détournement* of pre-constituted aesthetic elements' that can be materially realised through, for instance, collage or montage. This technique was borrowed by the SI from Lettrism.

35 *International Situationniste*, 19.

The choice to employ the *fotoromanzo* scheme, an editorial product aimed at the less educated and often illiterate classes, was probably due to an awareness of stimulating a kind of estrangement from the everyday context by using it as a means of psychogeographical popularization.[36] The instances of the Situationists, in fact, moved from a strong criticism of the trivialization of everyday life and the alienation of the individual whose consciousness, in modern society, was mystified.[37]

The *fotoromanzo* scenography was originally made of domestic spaces, familiar and everyday life scenes that, precisely because of the introduction of the extraordinary of the romantic, provoked a telluric movement in the imagination of the reader who identified with the scenarios.

Moreover, the *fotoromanzo* was constructed through a narrative form that had a language of its own: metaphors, hyperboles, literary stereotypes, etc. that found no real correspondence in any written or spoken language. Through its lines, between the columns and captions, an abstract, independent, but concrete phraseology was literally encoded.[38]

As Turzio writes, in contrast to the general opinion that consider *fotoromanzo* a subcultural product, reading could provoke a vibration capable to shape the conflict or encounter between interpretive orthodoxy and the silently and vernacular creativity, transgression, irony, and poetic activity of the reader.[39]

If, on the one hand, the photostory did not only offer the dream, but attempted to direct it through an ideological discourse (which does not have to be thought, but rather accepted), on the other hand, the audience looking for evasion could refuse it.[40] According to De Certeau, reading always represents an act of subjective freedom, a poaching practice escaping in liminal and unpredictable ways the dominant narratives. Reading ends up constituting interstices, spaces of representation and individual emancipation. The text, in fact, only acquires meaning through its readers,

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36 Turzio provides a dense account of the public opinion of the time when *fotoromanzo* became popular. In Italy, this editorial format was particularly criticised by leftist parties and more urgently by the Italian Communist Party, which believed *fotoromanzo* was an American invention aimed at disseminating North American culture. The criticism was condemnatory and sensitive to the women cause, claiming that *fotoromanzo* was proposing standardised and unreal female models. Interesting in this debate were Giuliana Saladino's (a Sicilian activist) remarks on the educational and empowering impact of the genre. She wrote that *fotoromanzo* was an accessible medium for illiterate women to become aware – through simple plots, pictures, and short slogan - of their condition of female oppression and subalternity. See: Silvana Turzio, *Il fotoromanzo: metamorfosi delle storie lacrimevoli* (Milano: Meltemi, 2019).

37 The work of the situationists has been strongly (and mutually) influenced by the works of Henri Lefebvre: Henri Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne* (Montreuil: L'Arche, 1947), and Norbert Guterman, Henri Lefebvre, *La conscience mystifiée* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936). More specifically, they resumed the attempt to reshape the perception of the everyday by overcoming the trivialisation, commodification and spectacularization of ordinary life, starting from the consideration that the consciousness of the modern individual is mystified by production relations.

38 Dajelli, *Fotoromanzo invenzione italiana*, 180.

39 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 244.

40 Dajelli, *Fotoromanzo, invenzione italiana*, 192.

morphs with them and finds its own order according to unprecedented codes of perceptions, sensations, expectations and evoked memories that continually elude systematization.[41]

In terms of research method, Rumney adopted the walking dérive, as stated on the first page of the text through Debord's quote. To that concept, Rumney matched an aerial view of the city of Venice on which the psychogeographical trajectory is plotted. In the following pages, however, Rumney presented several shots: historical monuments, *calli* and *campi*,[42] people intent on their business, and children playing are all the portrayed characters of his photographic recherche.

Rumney walked through the city of Venice accompanied by his friend and colleague the writer Allan Alsen, who is the protagonist of the author's pictures and that will be referred as "A." From the beginning, he stated, "our thesis is that cities should embody a built-in play factor. We are studying here a play-environment relationship. At this stage environment is of greater interest than the player".[43]

The playful type of Rumney's *oeuvre*, which is presented not only in the form of the drift, but also reported through the *détournement* of the analytical methodology, challenged the traditional representation of the city.

While Venice offered the opportunity for disorientation by stimulating the process of drifting, Rumney's goal was not to get lost among the *calli* and *campi*. Rather he wanted to push the spectacularized reading of a city devoured by consumption toward the search for its inherent playful component and study its effects on those who traversed its space. "Venice-type play pattern is crystallizing",[44] the author wrote on a column. However, it was still possible to be amazed by the "microclimate" that characterizes some parts of the city: "we suspect that in special cases weather is modified by environment", distinguishing sinister, from beauty or even depressing areas.

As was the case with psychogeographical maps, particularly with the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) and *The Naked City* (1957), Rumney's work showed the attempt to offer a vision of space based on affective experiences. Here, spatial topography was no longer drawn from abstraction, but rather from direct embodied experience.

In the attempt to discard traditional mapping *savoir* and to offer a psychogeographical representation, lied the Situationists attempt to shred that same space,[45] now rendered through a collection of diverse and discontinuous images (which, however, have their own rhythm). In a sense, by

41 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 240.

42 Local denominations for squares and streets in Venice.

43 Rumney, *The leaning tower of Venice*.

44 Ibid.

45 De Certeau, *L'invenzione del quotidiano*, 181.

choosing *fotoromanzo*, Rumney not only invited his readers to engage in the playful activity of dérive, but also to enjoy the creative format of the text.

As was the case with psychogeographical maps, the blank interstices between photographs (both material and narrative) did not only respond to editorial needs; on the contrary, they were fulfilled with meanings. Those tiny off-white spaces really served as passports for the poaching reader ho was warmly invited to fabricate his imaginary theatre of actions and encouraged to fluctuate between what it is written and his own, subjective playground.

Conclusions

Rumney's text, understood as a psychogeographical product, shows the possibility of providing a different reading of the space the author crossed during his psychogeographic drift. Crucial in this sense is the term 'crossed', as space in this psychogeographical exercise is mapped from the effects and impacts on the individual's experience and, more specifically, on the researcher's body. To this regard, Ralph Rumney's psychogeographical *fotoromanzo* can be understood as a form of subversive affective urban mapping.

It is interesting to note that the psychogeographical *fotoromanzo*, like it was for the *Guide Psychogéographique de Paris* (1957) and *The Naked City* (1957) collected impressions and affections as data with the aim of rendering a subjective-objective reading of the urban fabric.

In this regards Rumney's *The Leaning Tower of Venice* represents an unprecedented example of psychogeographical effects displaying on a book. However, here more than in other situationists works, the emotional heritage of the space and its rhythmicity are gathered and made manifest.

Even from a qualitative methodology point of view, the work has so many resonances with the walking ethnographies and can be considered a valid contribution for inspiring a creative turn in data collection.

Especially with the turn to phenomenology, poststructuralism, and contemporary feminism theories, the bodily senses superseded their illegitimate status becoming important means for gathering significant details that cannot be collected in other ways. As – among others - it is the case for emotional geographies, the subjective (and sometimes also political[46]) dimensions enter that of science showing that data collected through an aseptic reading of reality are not always enough to offer a complete

46 It is worth to mention the contribution, in contemporary walking ethnographies of the politically nuanced work of *The Walking Lab* group, which builds on the importance of place, sensory inquiry, embodiment, and rhythm within critical walking methodology. Generally speaking, the most important source of this drive is due to the influence of feminisms on the approach to research. See: Stephanie Springgay and Sarah Truman, 'Walking in/as publics,' *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, no. 4, (2019).

insight of the observed phenomenon.

In a sense, the intuition of the psychogeographical method, was that of pushing toward a deconstruction of the legitimated research patterns, to make room for the collection of subjective relationships and affections. Only the gathering of these perceptions represented a more comprehensive, *démistyfiée* and accurate description of a particular space or place.[47]

For the situationists, walking enabled to unveil and expose the urban fabric to an active critical reading by showcasing the order of the dominant representations and by suggesting that not only has space the potential to direct individuals' perception, but also can stimulate habits and behaviours. SI commitment consisted in understanding the influence of space representations and practices on individuals' daily lives and through the employment of psychogeographical techniques, synchronise with and decipher that same flow.

Without much hesitation, but that it was rather considered a vehicle that the *dérive* in the psychogeographical project represented a tool for critical investigation, but was rather considered, vehicle for political engagement and emancipation.

47 As Wood points out, it is worth mentioning that the development of psychogeography runs parallel to Kevin Lynch's studies on the imageability and legibility of American cities (Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: MIT, 1968)). There are many similarities between the two, suffice it to mention the emphasis on users' subjective representations of urban space and 'mental mapping.' However, if for Lynch the ultimate aim of his research is to provide material for urban planners, so that they can take these elements into account in the design of more user friendly cities (and thus a certain confidence in government action is implicit), for Debord, and more generally for situationists, psychogeography and its products «aimed at nothing less than the collective takeover of the world» whereas urban planning is considered «a rather neglected branch of criminology». See: Denis Wood, "Lynch Debord: About Two Psychogeographies," *Cartographica*, 45, no. 3 (2010): 195. As with the SI, for Lynch the drive to emphasize user-friendliness stemmed from an aversion to the utilitarian forms conceived by the Modern Movement that standardized the needs of the individual. In this regard, it is deserving of mention Jane Jacobs work which, to the massive cité radieuse of Le Corbusier, contrasts a city of proximity no longer on the scale of man understood as a machine, but of the human. See: Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (New York: Random House, 1961).

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Erratum Corrige
Towards an Island-based Narrative of the Western Mediterranean Borderscape – Continental Islands as Condensers and Laboratories
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When the article above was initially published online on May 21st, 2024, a mistake in the editorial process resulted in the release of a draft version rather than the revised version by the author, Isabella Traeger.

- The draft version included the abstract: “This article proposes to contribute towards this aims by analysing through a *borderscaping* approach the remote micro-islands and enclaves which constitute the EUro-mediterranean Southern border, namely Ceuta, Melilla, the Canary Islands, Gibraltar and the Pelagie islands. The article examines these territories as precursors and testing grounds in the implementation of ‘Fortress EUrope’; before focusing on their historical role as core of highly-integrated cross-border regions. It concludes on the potential of these territories as testing grounds of novel trans-Mediterranean narratives and political practices.” The abstract has now been corrected to: “The article focuses on six Western Mediterranean micro-islands and enclaves which act as condensers and catalysers of the region’s multifaceted bordering phenomena. While these territories have become the principal theatre of Europe’s muscular re-bordering brought to its paroxysm by the ‘migration crisis’, they are also the core of (historically) highly integrated cross-border regions. As such, they constitute privileged testing grounds for the development of more nuanced and equitable trans-Mediterranean narratives and political practices.”
- The author’s affiliation has been corrected from: “Polytechnic University of Milan, Italy” to: “Politecnico di Milano, Italy”
- The keywords, previously listed as: “Euro-Mediterranean Border; Mediterranean Islands; Re-bordering; Post-colonial.” have been corrected to: “Mediterranean Islands; EUro-Mediterranean Border; Border Studies.”
- The formulation: “Euro-mediterranean” has been corrected as: “EUro-Mediterranean” throughout the entire article’s text.

- Figure 1 (Fig.1) caption: "Legend. Source: author's elaboration" has been corrected to: "Atlas of Mediterranean Continental Islands. Source: author's elaboration based on data from Ministero del Interno; Statistics Office HM Government of Gibraltar; Istituto Nazionale di Statistica."
- Figure 2 (Fig.2) caption: "Legend. Source: author's elaboration" has been corrected to: "CIs' border enforcement and transcendence in the past century. Source: author's elaboration based on the cited literature."
- The subsection title: "3.1 CIs as principal theatre of the 'immigration crisis'" has been corrected to: "3.1 CIs as principal theatre of the 'migration crisis'"
- The section title: "4. De-Bordering: Continental Islands as Imperfect Interfaces" has been corrected to: "4. De-Bordering: CIs as Imperfect Interfaces"
- The section title: "Conclusion: CIs as Fertile Terrain for the Creation of an Alternative Mediterranean Narrative" has been corrected to: "Conclusion: CIs as Fertile Terrain for the Creation of Alternative Narratives"
- The reference: "Domínguez-Mujica, Josefina, Beatriz Andreu-Mediero, and Nadia Kroudo. "On the Trail of Social Relations in the Colonial Sahara: A Postcolonial Reading." Social & Cultural Geography, 19, no. 6 (March 16, 2017): 741–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2017.1304567." has been removed from the article's text as it is no longer used in the author's revised version.
- The reference: "Ferrer-Gallardo, Xavier, Abel Albet-Mas, and Keina Espiñeira, "Euro-African Invisibilisations in the Border(land)scape of Punta Tarifa". In Borderscaping: Imaginations and Practices of Border Making. Edited by Chiara Brambilla, Jussi Laine and Gianluca Bocchi. Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015." has been removed from the article's text as it is no longer used in the author's revised version.
- The references: "Ferrer-Gallardo, Xavier and Albet-Mas, Abel, "EU-Limboscapes: Ceuta and the proliferation of migrant detention spaces across the European Union". European Urban and Regional Studies 23, no. 3 (2016): 527-530. DOI: 10.1177/0969776413508766." and: "Ferrer-Gallardo, Xavier and Gabrielli, Lorenzo. "The Ceuta Border Peripeteia: Tasting the Externalities of EU Border Externalization." Journal of Borderlands Studies, 37 no.3 (2022): 645-655, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2022.2048680." have been added to the article's text as they are used in the author's revised version at page 60 (footnote 36) and page 62 (footnote 44), respectively.
- The reference: "Gabrielli, Lorenzo. "Pandemia e sconvolgimento dei

sistemi migratori: il caso del corridoio Marocco-Spagna." Mondi migranti 1/2021 (2021): 123-141. DOI: 10.3280/MM2021-001007" has been added to the article's text as it is used in the author's revised version at page 62 (footnote 43).

- The reference: "Martin, María; Ayuso, Silvia and Clemente, Yolanda "The fences dividing Europe: how the EU uses walls to contain irregular migration". El País, April 9, 2023. www.english.elpais.com/international/2023-04-08/the-fences-dividing-europe-how-the-eu-uses-walls-to-contain-irregular-migration.html" has been added to the article's text as it is used in the author's revised version at page 59 (footnote 30).
- The reference: "Statistics Office, HM Government of Gibraltar. Census of Gibraltar 2012, 2012." has been added to the article's text as it is used in the author's revised version at page 62 (footnote 47).
- The reference: "Walker, Peter, "UK Considers Sending Asylum Seekers Abroad to be Processed," The Guardian. March 18, 2021. www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2021/mar/18/asylum-seekers-could-be-sent-abroad-by-uk-to-be-processed." has been removed from the article's text as it is no longer used in the author's revised version.

Other minor corrections in form, such as punctuation and grammatical errors, have been made to the article's text, following the author's revised version.

The updated PDF version of the article, incorporating all the noted corrections, was released on May 30th, 2024.

CPCL's editorial team apologizes for this error.

Bologna, May 30th, 2024.